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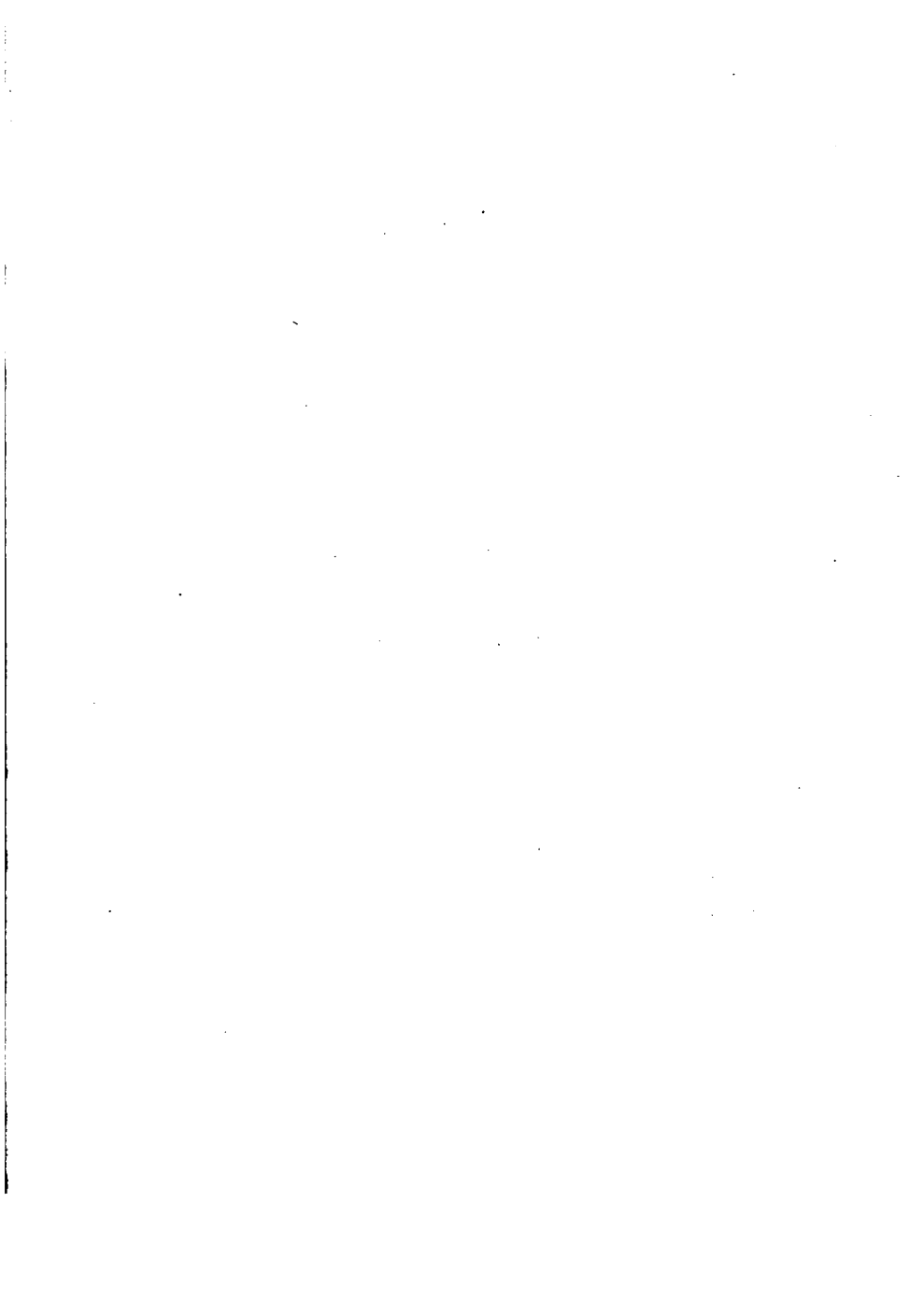
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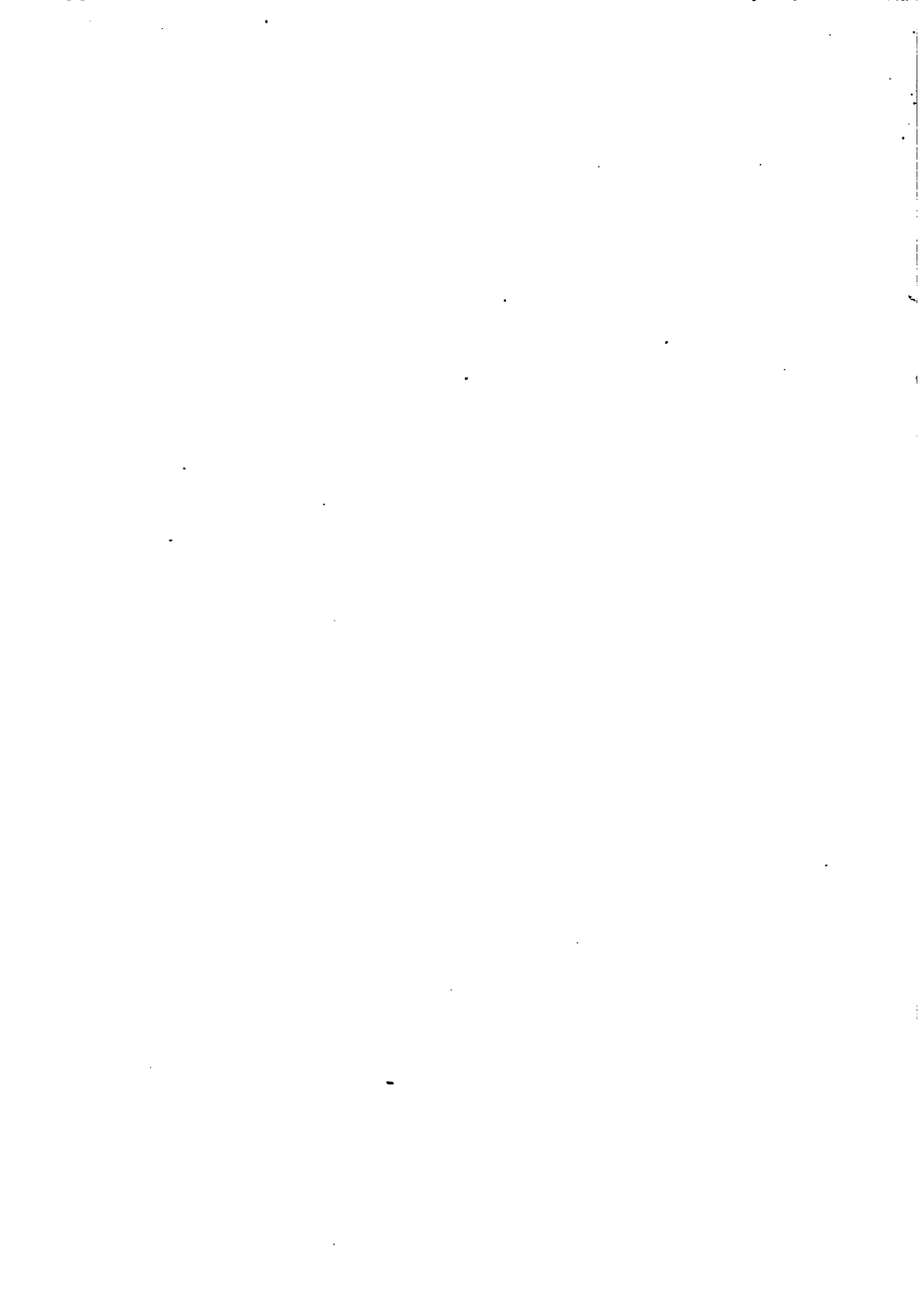
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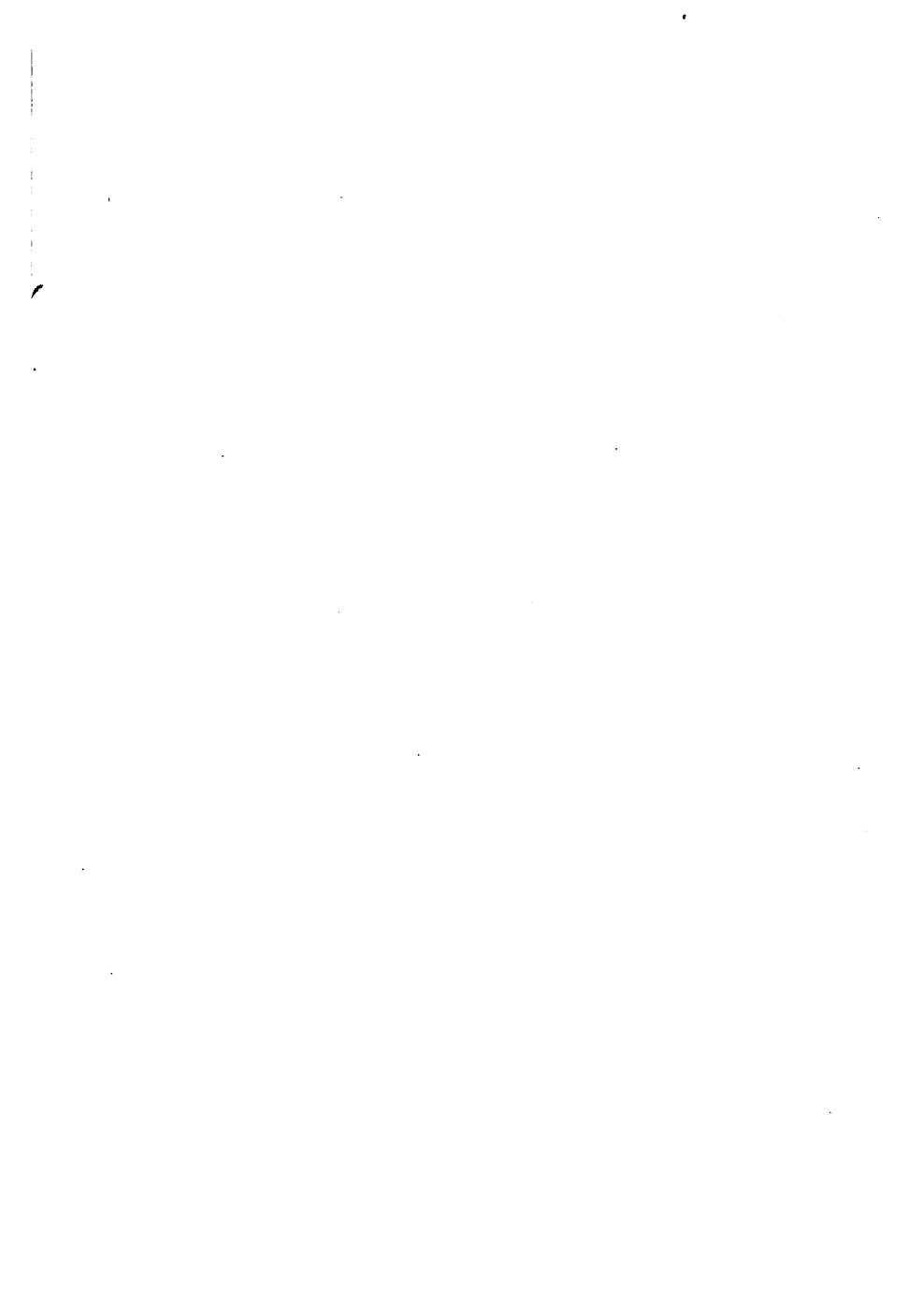
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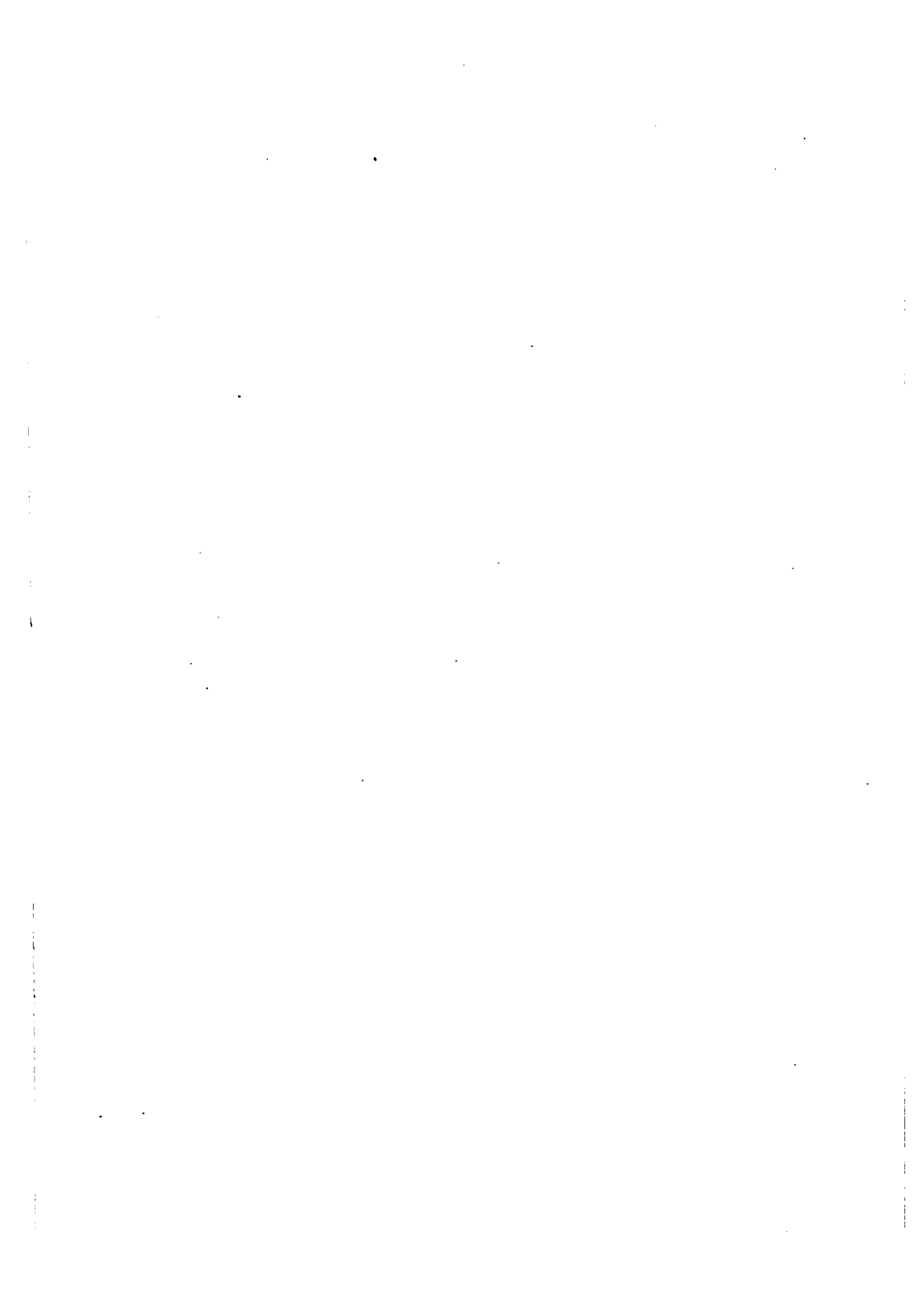
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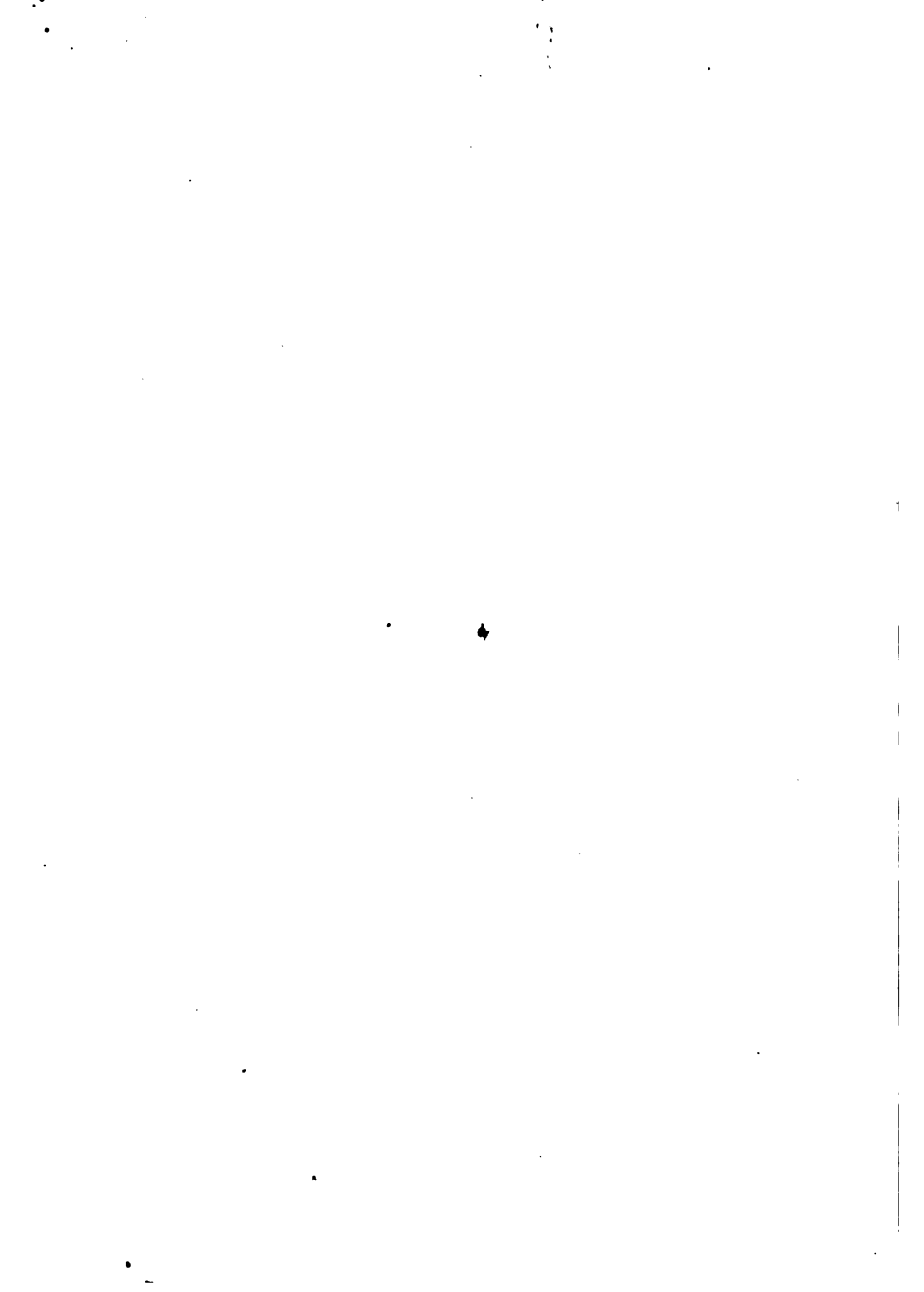












EB 7 1907
A series of fifteen pamphlets issued weekly on Tuesdays
from January 15 to April 23, inclusive

NUMBER ONE

JANUARY 15, 1907

STAGE AFFAIRS IN AMERICA TODAY

BY

ALLEN DAVENPORT

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

P. O. BOX 1341

SINGLE NUMBERS TEN CENTS

Supplement
to the
Author

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Feb. 11, 1907.

Mr. R.
Joseph C. Rowell Esq.

Dear Sir:

Your communication of the 5th inst. is at hand. It affords me a genuine sense of rational satisfaction to hear that your "University of California" is pleased in receiving "Stage Affairs".

I forwarded No. 1. with others of a limited list of discriminate distribution. Its failure to arrive puzzles me. But I will immediately forward another copy as soon as I can procure one. Should any later ones

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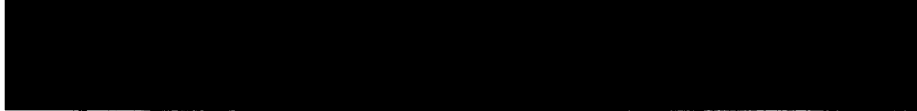
Very respectfully yours

Allen Davenport.

To

Joseph C. Russell Esq.

"University of California".





Stage Affairs in America Today.

—BY—

ALLEN DAVENPORT.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

This pamphlet edition of "Stage Affairs" contains fifteen numbers; they will appear serially on Tuesdays of each week from January 15 to April 23, 1907 (inclusive). In earnestly soliciting attention to the opinions offered herein, my chief credential that might seem to warrant such entreaty, is the accrument of more than sixteen years of intimate, active association and critical observance of the people and conditions of the theatre in America; their aims, tendencies and resultant effects; and with a wholesome desire to justly praise all that which is good, and to modestly suggest what (in my opinion) would serve as a remedial adjustment for that which is evil. This I shall do with sound conviction, with profound respect, and an ardent, optimistic enthusiasm for the stage of the future, and truly innocent of any ill-disposed intent to assail and belie the established creeds and managerial methods of its institutions and their incumbents of to-day. Any critical comment seeking to interestedly regulate such early convictions (for the author is widely awake to the detriment ef-

fect to initiatory writers through an exuberancy of ideas and diction) will be considered a mark of benevolent attention, and truly a favor. And whatsoever herein might gain some support from any stable source, in thinking to notice such, would tend only to more speedily correct any convictions that more able and experienced judges were indulgent enough to adversely, with honesty, remark upon.

ALLEN DAVENPORT.

I.

THE PLAYWRIGHT.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF HIS COMMISSION.

The playwright, the manager, the actor. If the theatre would wish to exist for the highest fulfilment of its proper mission, and remain in an indissoluble state of stable worth, the above-mentioned primal, co-essential forces in co-efficient form, must exist in a co-harmonious plan of superior workmanship. Each one is highly necessary to the other; but the playwright is the very heart of this tri-essence, and should (its other co-essential factors working all in trinitarian confederacy) pulsate into vigorous life and health the substance which this vital union shapes, — the institution of the theatre. The condition of playwright is the vital fluid flowing throughout this substance. The state of healthiness or impoverishment of this fluidity manifests and determines the condition of the substance it sustains. The condition

of the theatre is soundest when the heart-essence, the playwright, maintains it by the highest degree of purity.

And in what one particular element is preserved the greatest purity and lasting strength of the drama? In its diction; in the intellectuality, elegance and effectualness of its language. While a play should present a theme worthy of consideration, sanely founded, methodically constructed, thoughtfully promoted, interestingly, entertainingly and absorbingly pursued, brought adroitly and forcibly to a logical climax, then finally its plot and sub-plots concisely, unflaggingly and clearly determined, — nevertheless, — as necessary and important as these stipulations are to the best condition of play-writing, they do not attain for the author (even when apparent to an exceptional degree) a condition of real worth in the art of play-writing if he fails of intellectual, elegant and effective diction.

The playwright may entertain lofty, beautiful, fanciful thoughts and images, he may be able to quite sufficiently suggest such images through the mechanical resources of pageantry and stage effectualness generally; but no mere pantomime nor mechanical device can ever supplant the necessity of a corresponding loftiness of diction to truthfully reveal any high thoughts purposed. The playwright may be able to picture, and reproduce with faithfulness, the ordinary scenes of life; but, if we are to gain in the rightful mission of the stage, higher thoughts and better life, unless the playwright can exalt his images to something superior, and sustain in his diction a corresponding fitness, the stage had better totally surrender any intention of a proper beneficence to

mankind, than to proclaim and champion such sentiment, and yet blemish its worthiness by permitting the intrusion of such miserly mocksters as find sanction from its careless guardians, both screened by a blind understanding of what the public wants. And it is in the ability of the playwright to translate his best mentality into exalted diction that shall secure the best condition of the essential force of which he is the vital factor. The language, the diction of a play, whether read or listened to, is the ever predominant force that seizes and holds the attention.

And it is in the exaltedness of diction, the attainment of it, that we alone can hope for the best condition of histrionic art. It is the force and power of that diction that prompts and compels the greatest accomplishments of the actor. It makes possible all the higher, the embodied variety of facial expression and gesture that such diction must naturally contain. Even in the matter of common pantomime it is a language that prompts and compels it. The fact that pantomime, inarticulate language, has never, nor can it ever, transcend the importance of diction, articulate language, in the exposition of a play, argues for the essential need of playwrights distinguished in the superiority of their diction. To regulate and utilize thoughts and ideas for the purposes of pantomime is a matter of calculative mechanism. The material of this storage force to be sent through the organic regulators to become pantomime, inarticulate language, is, most generally, of very ordinary importance. It is not difficult to find competent regulators for such. But when this vital storage force transcends to grandeur and sublimity, no regulators can be found to fully sustain its tremendousness through the mere

channels of pantomime alone, not only because of their failure often to completely or sufficiently understand the highest purposes of such mental concealments, but because of the vital predominance of the language itself over all other conditions that go towards the making of a play. It must follow that only in an intelligent, elegant and effectual grasp and exposition of the diction of a play can be found the test of an actor's greatest endurance. A system of acting based on pantomime is fundamentally wrong. It sets in action the agents to emphasize, whereas they should be trained to control, emotions. No actor was ever great who was not proficient in a mental grasp and exposition of his native tongue or the language of his adoption. An emigrant just off a steamer might indicate in very good pantomime his wishes; but, even in his own tongue, he could only inelegantly express himself. More care and attention should be given to the development of a high importance of diction in play-writing.

I admit a purposely intentioned exaggeration, but notwithstanding contend that a most visible modicum of justifiable aptness must be seen in the statement that too many authors of to-day write their plays during the progress of a rehearsal, and even of its performances. A noted playwright who has recently visited America and lectured at some of her leading universities, speaks wisely and vitally in urging the publication of plays. This would be of benefit to the public, of course, of vast importance to the studious actor devoted to his art, and its advantages tending towards a better condition of critical review would be manifold. But there is yet another reason why such a condition should exist. For the sake of

the playwright himself and the exaltation of his art. The exposition of his diction would serve as an impetus to excel in that essential. It would wonderfully help to correct and improve the vital force of the playwright's task, the purity of the diction through which he manifests his types and ideas. Many authors will say here, "You can't tell anything about a play till you have rehearsed it"; then when you are rehearsing they will say, "You can't tell till you have tried it." And when you have tried it, what is the test of its fitness to survive? The immediate condition of public approval that has been incited and maintained by the various mediums of modern advertisement? The verdict of the press for or against? The significance of a long run? And many other stipulations entering into the capriciousness of the public and ingenuity of managerial skill? No,—the test of endurance in any play is the hold and respect it will command when you take it down from the shelf to read; when its diction contains some quality of permanence. That is the vitality of any play, and I believe that that is the first reason why they should be published. That would necessitate a state of preparation, and compel care in the matter of diction. If the playwright is doubtful of the value of some of the situations, effects and "business" he has employed, he should not hesitate to confer with some master in that department. The playwright should seek also the critic in the preparation of his composition. I mean the truly distinguished individual of that craft. One of the great impediments to the attainment of exaltation in stage affairs to-day is in the alarming unconcerned state of unpreparedness in all its conditions. When such a condition is altogether

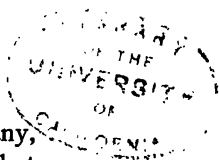
apparent with the playwright, the vital force of the stage, it necessarily follows that all adjunctive forces must suffer from the stagnancy caused by their predominant governing power.

Not long ago there appeared a reported interview wherein an American playwright, one truly enjoying marked prominence and profit from his works, complained (in words to this effect, at least) that he had to endure no small amount of criticism from fellow associates of his craft because he treated the matter of play-writing as such a serious one; his critics, furthermore, dwelling on the comparative inconsequence of the condition of play-writing in America to-day. There is abundant proof of the truth of that reported assertion. We have a few very clever writers of smart plays. That cannot be denied. But their trivial designs and reckless diction (though often of momentary exhilaration and pleasing entertainment) would seem to strengthen any argument purporting an inclination, or a determined intention on the part of the author, not to treat the quality of his commission, or the importance of his mission, with any commendable seriousness. It is either that or a lack of proper effort; and perhaps an inability to rise above the medium of prim mediocrity. There would seem to be ample reason to suspect the latter weakness, for in the few attempts made by these writers to construct on some theme of vital importance, they signally fail, not only in maintaining the theme itself, but in their endeavor to fittingly dignify with robes of worthy diction the form that they supply. In America to-day there are many who are skilled in the practice of play building, perhaps, but their diction is seldom above the medium of colloquialism, and often

descends to the plane of commonplace conversation, and not infrequently to the condition of unlearned, ill-mannered talk.

The playwright who is not heedful of the unlimited benefits he is empowered to bestow upon, and the real usefulness of the service he owes to and holds the authority to exercise over his public, can never rightfully hope for permanent and valuable profit to that public or to himself. The playwright has a great commission! He who usurps that trust and debases it with the substitution of criminal counterfeit,—the outgrowth of cunning ignorance, misdirected energy, and wilful plagiarism,—threatens public decorum, poisons its taste, and stagnates its higher instincts and nature. The playwright at best is the clergyman in the consecrated seclusion of his workroom. The stage, to fulfil a mission greater than does any other institution save that of the church, must be rescued from the clutches of irregular commercialism, illiteracy and charlatanry. It must invite, promote and maintain a status of high import. And this status must be attained by — and when once assured always receive — the unswerving support of that co-efficient, co-harmonious threefold working force — manager, playwright, actor.

The playwright's labor finds expression through the co-operate, adjunctive mediums of stage manager, actor, singer, scenic artist, musician, and the art mechanics of the theatre. These offices are responsible ones, and the discharging of their functions has much to do with making or marring the discourse of the playwright. We should hold them high and follow them honestly, but none of these adjuncts should be so lavishly employed as to predominate,



darken or impede the play; they should accompany, illumine and hasten it. Can we to-day truly say that this is often so? What commission does the playwright receive from the manager? Does the manager say, "Write me a play of worthy theme, noble purpose, literary elegance, dignified personages, pleasing, wholesome comedy, action, and so on, then when you have completed the mental conception we will select some pretty colors of human type to express your image within an appropriate frame"? No, he more likely says, "I have some pretty colors and a handsome frame; patch me up a picture"; or, "Here is a popular novel; pick out the glaring threads and sew them into a single garb." The manager himself sometimes presumes this mission; the actor also. The mediocre clergyman, the sensational preacher, rushes in to fill the vacuum unpossessed of worthy matter. He seldom maintains the meanest idealism of his pulpit. With the adjuncts that the theatre supplies, he should embellish and exalt his context. Then again the newspaper journalist invades the field. He holds some uses that the manager is not unmindful of. It is quite evident that the fraternity of the press will make some sympathetic response; that is altogether wrong if the material under consideration be not worthy. The playwright's is an art by itself! And if there be men and women desirous of preparing, studying and finishing it as such, what hope lies before to inspire them or help at hand to maintain them, when such impudent usurpation of their proper commissions confronts them?

Furthermore, with stage affairs in America to-day, it is not generally the play, but the player, that receives the first consideration. If this player were

most always proficient in his art, we would not so much complain; or were he true to a proper exposition of its best purposes. But such is not often the case. This player rarely is selected because of his exceptional talent, but most frequently because of some youthful charm of person, extraordinary mold of beauty; sometimes through the highest degree of creative taste and fashion in dress and make-up; then again through some natural, unhelpable peculiarity of speech or manner; and still again by possession of hereditary inheritance; and in a few instances through the enjoyment of an income (or means at hand through other channels) to buy a vehicle in which to parade his pretence. To fit any one or all, of these forms with tinsel robes to hide their deformities and immerse the drifting parasites in tow, is, in the general conduct of affairs to-day, the enforced commission of the one who furnishes entertainment for the theatre's patrons. This is affording sensual sustenance to the prodigal, and starving the home. The manager orders it, the playwright provides it, the actor exhibits it, and the public buys and partakes of it.

Wherein lies the remedy? Not with the public, surely. Because a child prefers salads and pastries to substantial, wholesome diet is poor excuse for giving it to him. But he will take it if you are so unwise as to indulge him. To develop and preserve a healthy physical condition in mankind is vitally important. At times, if the ingredients be pure and well prepared, no special harm can follow in allowing the child a judicious amount of salad and pastry. But he should be made to prefer and partake of the wholesome first. That is a duty of his providers.

We are all children of the nation. We wish to develop and preserve for it a mental wholesomeness as well. To do that properly we must develop and preserve a preference for what is good and substantial. That condition apparent in the individual sustains the totality. But be assured too many of us will prefer salad and pastry if you so indulge us. Here also it is the providers who are responsible. With them it should be a duty to provide wholesomeness if we would develop and preserve in mankind a condition of mental healthiness. Now and again, if the ingredients be pure and well prepared, a little salad and pastry is a good thing even as a mental diet.

And so the manager and actor must realize and acknowledge, the former his true mission of the institution he conducts, the latter a reverence for the art he professes. Then both should confess and maintain a fidelity and support to the playwright desirous of fulfilling his offices through a determination to excel by devoted energy and through emulation of the best and highest that have preceded him. And at last, these three primal factors working in co-efficient, co-harmonious union establishes a standard, and at once compels and holds the desired following, fulfilling in truth the wholesome aims of the vital trust they form,—the theatre. No one really wants an impure if he can have a pure article. Once he has been enabled to distinguish the latter, he won't take the former. If the manager were a man of integrity, he wouldn't order it. If the playwright wrote for the dignity of his art, for the intellectual purity, moral soundness of his great charge, he wouldn't provide it. If the actor regarded the beauty of the

art he professes, he wouldn't exhibit it. These conditions respected, it wouldn't be for sale; the public could not buy, and therefore would not have it to partake of. The manager must be honest in his business, the actor reverent to his art, the playwright faithful to his trust, both the former aiding him with fidelity and support.

So encourage, honor and respect the commission of the playwright. Seek to exalt it, that the skilful may build with gold, marble and oak; not debase it, submitting it to usurpation for the wanton apprentice to flout with foil, dirt and knotted driftwood. The playwright should always create superior types, except in cases of rare characters of positive dialects. Those the author should clearly define, and the employment of art in acting alone reveal. Reproducing on the stage conversation as it happens generally in real life is at best uninteresting, and often when truthfully transplaced, compromising to the best standard we might hope to maintain. This unreasoned strife for realistic touches in stage exhibition is (in its commonplace indifference and incongruous absurdity) impoverishing the vital properties of fanciful imagery, illusion and logically proportionate theatric effect; conditions that are the very props that sustain the best achievements and possibilities of the theatre. A critic prominent in a large theatrical city recently wrote as follows concerning a play strained with attempts at realistic effectualness: "Yet, with all this faithful devotion to realism, the —— (naming the play) remains unconvincing." It is impossible ever to convince of the utmost effectualness and dramatic worth of a play where authors insist on a reverence for realism in a theme

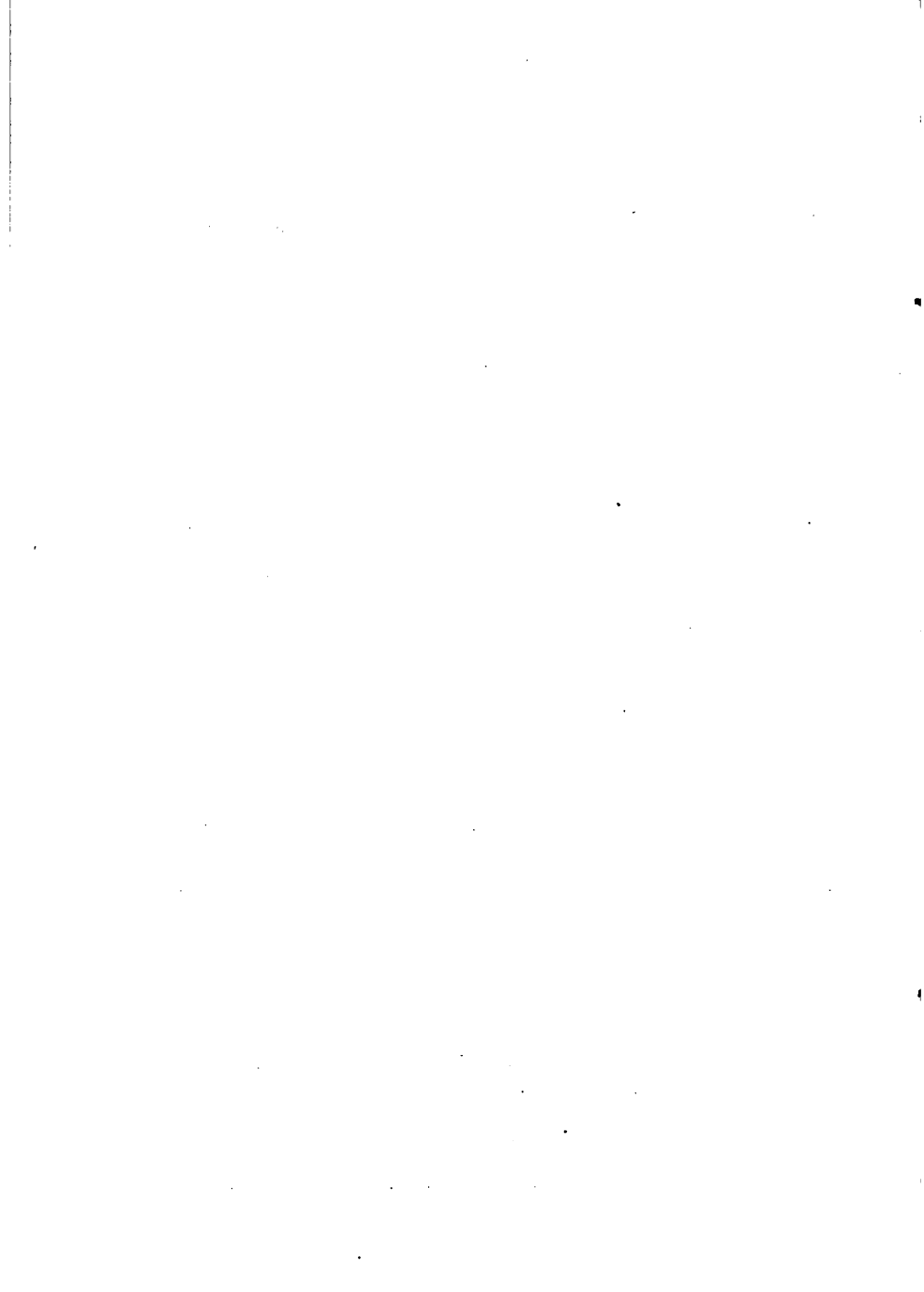
of common importance spun into a dramatic fabric through the medium of characters intending to transplace ordinary events in everyday life.

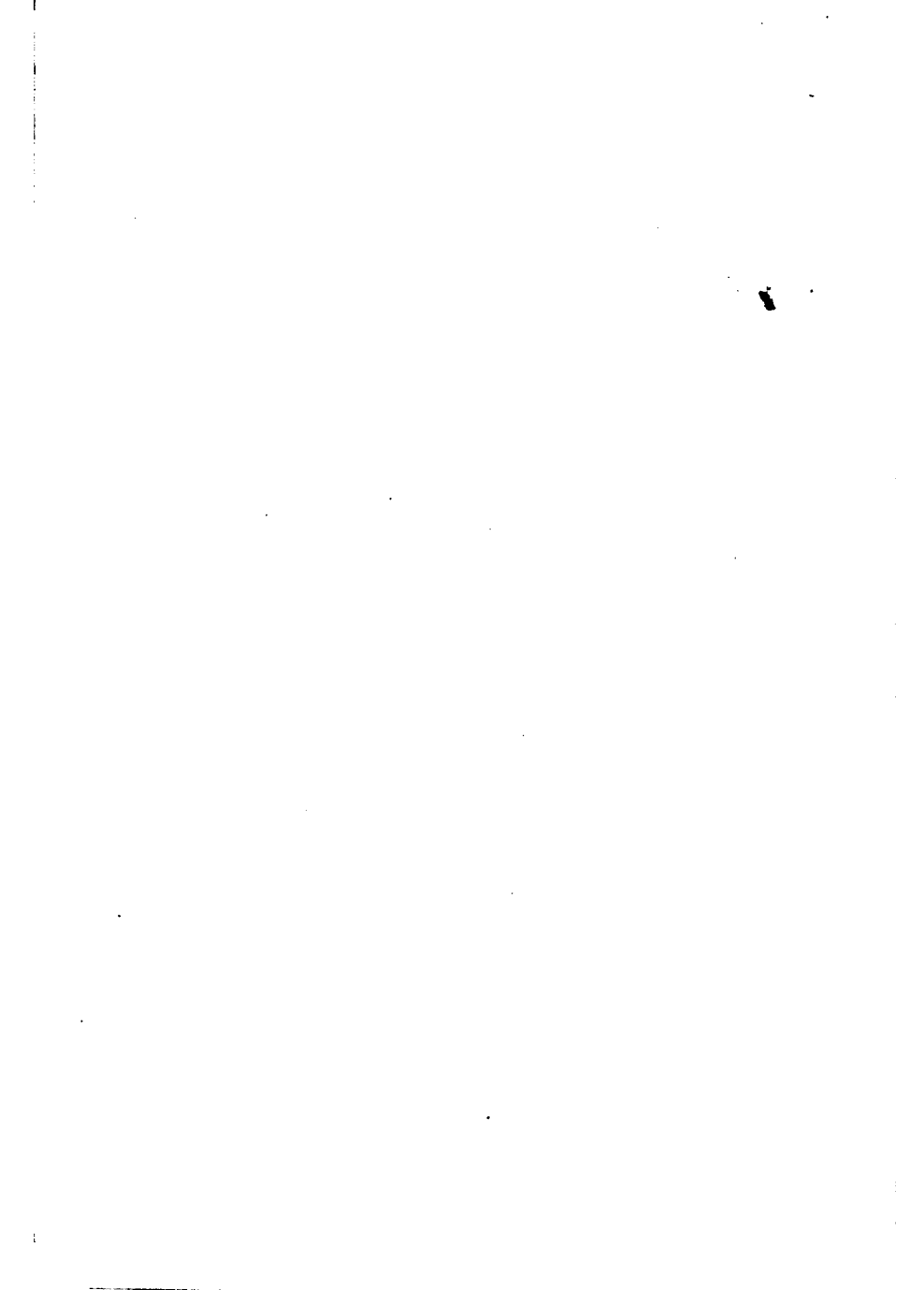
The stage of any nation should at any sacrifice and at all times maintain the purity of the mother tongue. The theatre should establish a criterion regarding the highest uses of the language of the people it entertains and instructs. As in a plea against the adoption of a curtailed system of spelling, so far more in an earnest cry for a purer understanding and a higher and more truthful exposition of the diction by which we express interchange of thought, let never the essence of a spirit of highest development descend to the demands and approval of carelessness and ignorance; but ever strive rather to enable that condition to approximately understand and reach the utmost exaltedness that such a spirit should truly inspire. Have done with puerile sentimentality, fetid sensationalism, comic ridicule, and their misnomer, *heart* interest. Build us plays of art design, pulsating life and thought through the channels of truth, purity and beauty, all centred in the vitality and nobleness of some true heart interest.

Number Two of "Stage Affairs," appearing January 22, 1907, concerns:

THE BUSINESS MANAGER.

HIS TRUE MISSION.





JAN 22 1907
A series of fifteen pamphlets issued weekly on Tuesdays
from January 15 to April 23, inclusive

NUMBER TWO

JANUARY 22, 1907

**STAGE AFFAIRS
IN AMERICA
TODAY**

BY

ALLEN DAVENPORT



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

P. O. BOX 1341

SINGLE NUMBERS TEN CENTS

Previous Issues of "Stage Affairs."

No. 1. The Playwright. The Vital Importance
of His Commission.

Stage Affairs in America Today.

—BY—

ALLEN DAVENPORT.

II.

THE BUSINESS MANAGER.

HIS TRUE MISSION.

It is not the spirit of commercialism itself that can ever stand a menace to a healthy progression in art endeavor; that, to the contrary, is its essential benefactor; but it is the ambitious strife to arrest, through loose integrity and a sacrifice of approximate idealism, the true mission of the high purposes of these conditions, and by the official force of monopolistic measure to gain and hold in close controlment the righteous freedom and natural legality of individual endeavor for supremacy, practised through the lawful ways and means of honesty, thrift and genuineness. To-day we are fast building commercial jails, and stuffing them with imprisoned wealth and empty notoriety. And yet the condition of equal opportunity has never before been so apparent and accessible as it is to-day. And the possibility of this most desirable condition has been due in no small measure to the beneficence of many individuals, who, in their quality

of commercial importance, are ignorantly misjudged and abused by the very ones to whom they open a highway of plain direction, if such would but follow, and not transgress its roadway. I admire and believe in an honest fight for individual supremacy; but as bitterly despise the vain supremacy that finds its ends through doubtful integrity and a disregard for approximate idealism.

In America to-day very nearly every condition and phase of the theatre that might and should tend towards placing its institutions on a high standard of business integrity, establishing a criterion in the composition and exhibition of dramatic material, and raising its expositors, the actors, to a just significance of the title "artist," — as one professing proper skill in the true accomplishment of a fine art, — nearly all such conditions and phases have become subservient to, or are wholly immersed in, the one predominant stipulation — irregular commercialism. While, when applied to the legitimate and necessary occupations in life (where actual needs are at the dictatorial dispensation of presumptuous control), such a condition is most deplorable and more freely open to censure, notwithstanding, in matters of art publication and exhibition directly affecting the moral and mental condition of the people, it should be none the less exempt from just criticism and an honest solicitation towards approximate adjustment.

Business is trade; buying and selling to realize a profit. A man is in business to make money. The theatre manager is no exception to this rule. If, with his business tact, he combines artistic tendencies and advances them to his common benefit, it is indeed a happy condition. But we look only for

business qualities in the theatre manager. As a business man conducting a first-class establishment, buying and selling,—trading,—his all-important requisite should be integrity. He should deal in pure, unadulterated goods. He is dealing in a luxury, in a way, an extravagance. It is not, of course, a necessity strictly speaking. From a purely business point of view he might be classed, in just importance, with the wine merchant and the tobacconist; or any tradesman that, in an indulgence of his wares, in any degree, such gratification necessarily takes the form of a luxury.

In a way, the theatre merchant has the greater trust. He has in charge the mental and moral factors of the public he sells to. The wine merchant and the tobacconist perhaps satisfy first the appetite; they furnish first a sensual feast, which, if abused, it is true might readily impair, not only the physical condition, but the mental and moral agents as well. The theatre merchant supplies a feast also; it is a visual, intellectual one, but which, if offered in an impure, adulterate form, might easily assail the mental and moral agents. All of these merchants deal in luxuries, which, if impure and adulterated, become a menace to society, producing an evil condition. Their trusts are solemn ones. Perhaps you will say, the wine merchant and the tobacconist are dealing in tangible stable goods, while the theatre merchant deals only in unfixed, vacillating material. You will not be altogether wrong at this day in saying so. But right does not always consist of what is, but rather what might and should be.

The theatre should be a methodic business, not a speculative chance. It should be a durable play-

house in the keeping of honest, staid merchantmen, not a trifling plaything in the hands of feverish, changeable gamesters. Every reputable merchant to maintain his custom must keep his goods pure and unadulterated. The merchant, if he be honest, will, when offering a new line of goods to his customers and smaller dealers, be careful of the quality before he offers it. He will put it to a test. Even then it does not always meet favor with his custom; but if he be honest, he quickly withdraws it. The customer will seldom complain. He may say that the goods do not come up to his expectation, and he prefers not to handle them. He may offer no explanation. The merchant he has received them from has his confidence. He knows of his integrity, and such an occurrence could not sever their bond of trade.

The theatre manager does not recognize any special test of the goods he is about to dispense. He says, "We never know till we have tried a play whether it will go or not." He means by that, make money or not. If, when he has tried it, the public and press unite in repelling it, in refusing to handle it, does the theatre manager always quickly withdraw it? In a few cases, where it is a hopeless failure beyond any dispute, he may perhaps; but generally speaking he resorts to methods to force his goods upon unknowing customers. He sets to work play-jobbers to hack and hew and patch up again; to interpolate, regardless of congruity, just proportions and continuity; any means that may lead to a readjustment of his pecuniary outlay and a hope of ultimate remunerative gain on imperfect, unsatisfactory material. He discriminately and indiscrim-

inately fills his theatre night after night with the show of patronage. He appropriates from press clippings fragments of sentences and falsely applies them in advertising purposes to deceive the public, his customers. He forces an unwarranted number of performances, and then prepares to send his salesmen ahead to delude his foreign buyers into purchasing his latest line of goods. He often supplies the places of superior, high-priced actors with inferior, low-paid talent. He cuts and trims where he can, and then advertises the complete production, with its original cast. This is not business integrity, and it does not deserve success. But it too often attains its end, —satisfying box-office receipts. But it is truly a condition of irregular commercialism.

In this great expansive country, the existence of trusts, if they are honest in purpose and method, is a condition much to the public's good. Indeed, it becomes almost a necessity in facilitating large operations. But if a trust is not honest, the extent of the evil it is capable of committing is in just proportion to the monstrousness of the corporation itself. It is the vicious spirit of monopoly that is to be dreaded. That spirit, evident at the inception, transmits to its offspring, the trust, the same disposition. That condition, uncorrected and animated through disregard of integrity, grows into the corrupt monster that must feed on the vitality of its smaller species if it would subsist. When it has sufficiently devoured this sustenance, and corrupted it hopelessly by contaminating embodiment, and nothing more remains to glut its abnormal craving, it decays in the natural stagnancy of its corruptness, and carries along with it all that has succumbed to its tyranny.

For what it has consumed and unremittingly destroyed, it makes no restitution. But if this trust be honestly fathered, it transmits an inheritance of good, which, if uprightly pursued, and its offspring not liable of seizure and surrender to this vicious spirit, grows into a vast beneficence. If the natural area of its activity encroaches on its smaller kind, it makes reparation for its trespass by the added advantages, facilities and reasonableness of charges offered to its beneficiaries, the public. If its practices be regular and the material it dispenses honest, this is lawful competition and beneficent. It does not seek to prevent competition; it invites and exhilarates it by the mere fact of its regularity and honesty. The men who conduct the business are honest, the ones who furnish the counters are honest, and the ones who dispense the goods are honest, even though they may all contain one head. Every moral and lawful obligation is fulfilled to the purchasers. If the business of the theatre could be relieved of speculation, dishonesty and charlatanry, and placed in the power of honest business managers, dealing with honest playwrights, and dispensing through honest actors, all working through the offices of trusts honestly fathered, it would truly lead to the proper adjustment of the theatre in America, and by the integrity of its providers, relieve the compliant and indulgent public of any further show of indiscreet civility. Such a state of affairs is impossible now, of course. The stipulated conditions must be steadily and healthily brought to a fixedness and realization of their just importance.

Merited independence can not be despotically set aside. It must either sink or succumb to the irreg-



ularities and practices of that despotism first. Monopoly is contrary to nature, and consequently only nature herself can best provide the condition that shall dethrone its tyranny. You cannot supplant it otherwise except by the triumph of enforced despotic competition of another monopoly, that must in time become as vicious as the one overthrown. To advance the theatre to the true dignity and rightful power that would claim the respect of all honest trade, it should be represented by merchants whose purposes and methods exemplify in highest meaning the word "integrity." Integrity of the individual in an honest fight for supremacy. If that individual stands for the dominant power of some big combination, just to the extent that the scope of his trust offices exceeds that of the single-handed individual, just to that farther reaching and broader extent becomes he capable of benefiting the public and the class of workmen he must employ, which means still farther an accrued advantage to the general condition of workmen. But he must be genuinely honest. Then, the trust creates and speeds good. But if dishonest, it must equally retard and demoralize any possible prospect of lasting benefit.

While the theatre manager should have positive views, and exercise the right to judge as to what material shall be exhibited from his stage, he should never presume to manage the preparation and exposition of it. That he may suggest or advise in quiet counsel is perfectly proper and desirable; but the affairs of the stage should be completely under the executive control of a competent stage manager. Each should amicably serve as a balance to the conservatism or liberalism of the other. We should do

away with stage synonyms; the stage director, the play producer, the actor-manager (the Pooh Bah of the theatre), who too often leaves no mark of future regard save the self-satiation of his personal vanity. We except, of course, a few of the great minds that have lent distinction and insured future worth to the stage. But they are few, and even with some of them it is questionable whether any positive benefit can accrue the future state of the stage through the greatness of actor-managers, who, in their autocratic insistence of a condition of complete subserviency to their predominant mentality, have checked and suffocated any apparent audacity of individuality fighting for deserved supremacy.

But to revert to the manager and now briefly discuss the tangibility of the material at the disposal of this theatre merchant. He conducts an art store. In the material he handles he is greatly reliant on a judicious employment and association with playwright, actor, musician, singer, scenic artist, art mechanics; and, in the provident production of their crafts. If these workers be proficient in their separate vocations, if they have prepared (before they profess to practise) their arts, if they be reliable, and honestly endeavor to best aid the manager and serve his patrons, the results of such purpose must be of tangible, stable worth, and sterling material to traffic in. But if they be incompetent, charlatans and dishonest, brazenly intruding into such domains, unprepared, unpractised, without even having served an apprenticeship, their wares consequently sink to the state of unfixed, vacillating worthlessness. To exhibit such material is hazarding a chance. It is mere speculation. It is dishonest. If the manager is cog-

nizant of such existing conditions (and of course he often must be), he so declares himself a trickster. If he wishes to be faithful and honest to the best purposes of his trust and to his public, he would neither employ nor associate with any craftsman whose work did not possess the quality of tangible, stable worthiness. It is to be lamented that this condition of unpreparedness and incompetency exists almost exclusively in the vocations of the actor and the playwright, the two conditions of all that should be found most thoroughly prepared and proficient. The arts of scene painter, musician, and even mechanic are virtually pursued with much more general methodical preparation, progression and finish than are those of actor and playwright. What wonder, then, that the spectacular and musical element of stage production predominates to-day. It is by virtue of a natural right. Not until the condition of actor and playwright be raised to a status of self-evidenced import, and some guarantee of fixedness attached to their liableness in the practise of their profession, just so long as these channels are open to the reckless intrusion of any mean applicant that has become possessed with a desire to write plays and act, unmindful of his lack of any proper degree of preparation or fitness to engage in such nice occupations, and just so long as the business manager will hazard a chance with such, through his speculative greed to seek quick pecuniary advantage, just so long there can be no healthy drama, nor any tangible worth attached to the trade of the theatre manager, nor any consequent dignity, importance and just respect shown for the institution he conducts — the theatre.

Assure the public of your integrity of purpose, and

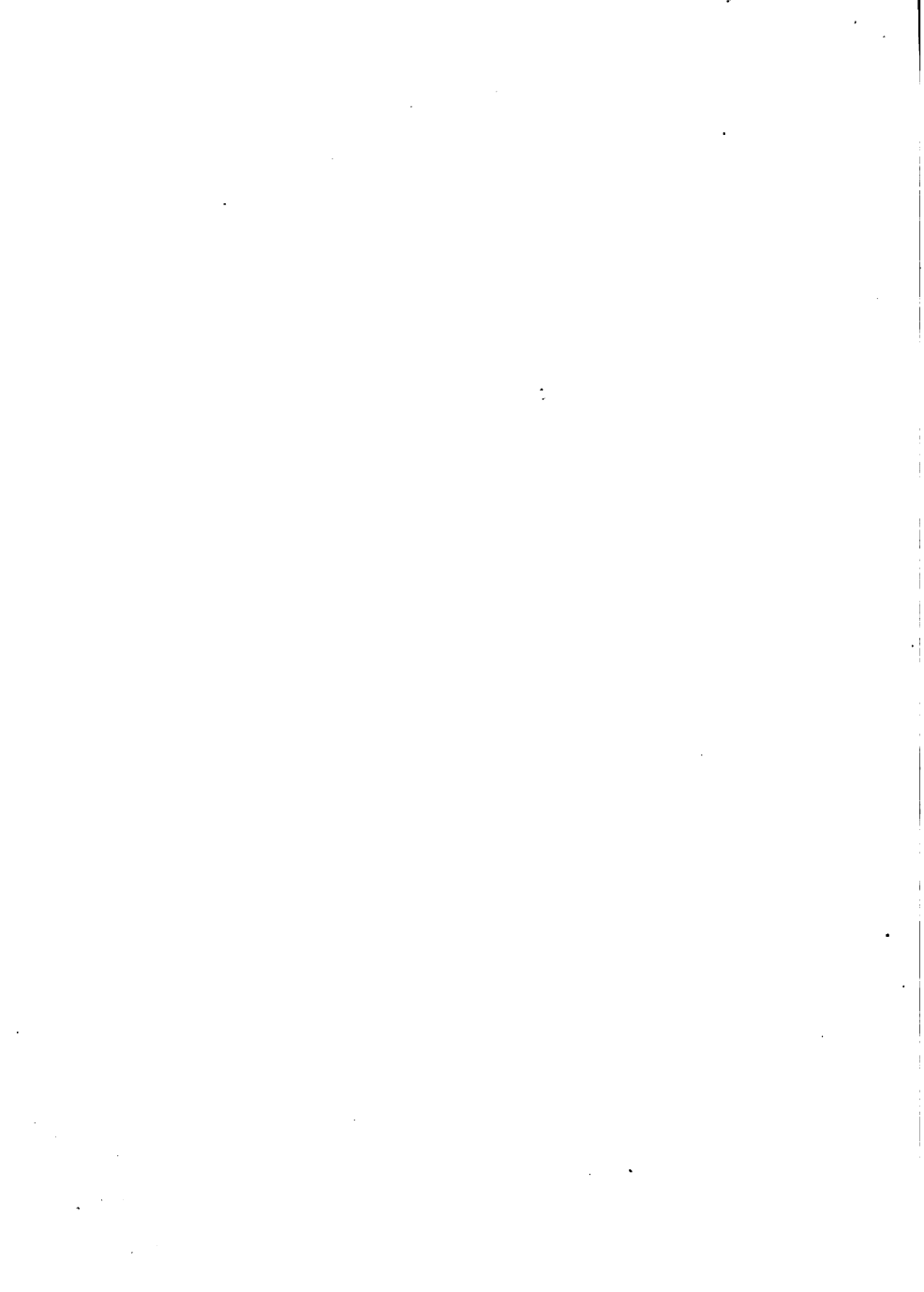
even if your production does not always come up to highest expectation, that public will not censure nor forsake you. It will leniently overlook the momentary relapse, and rest content in the assurance that the next offering will attain the standard of excellence which your integrity has taught them to expect. If it be argued that the supply cannot always meet the demand, I would reply that there lie unused hundreds of classic and standard dramas, high-class comedies, opera bouffe and burlesques, which in the hands of the skilled playwright and musician, aided by the adept stage manager, could, by expert uses of modern appliances, equipments and mechanical devices of the theatre of to-day, be reconstructed into highly approved, intellectual and relishable entertainment. At all events, they would be preferable to the inane, plotless fabrications of vulgar action and verbal slush concocted by brazen incompetency. Famous musicians and distinguished librettists have lent their art and talents to the building of opera bouffe and burlesque; now lost arts, emerged in the hectic whirl of distorted dialect, monkey grimaces and insolent ridicule masquerading as satire. Honesty and integrity in the business manager would move him to promote the former to the exclusion of the meaningless medley of current amusement that disturbs the best purposes of the theatre to-day. Such action would inspire an awakening to higher efforts in play-writing, and the ultimate results of such endeavor would furnish reliable material; tangible art goods. The theatre merchant then might take his place amongst the foremost tradesmen of the day. In his integrity and bid for public trust and confidence, it would not be unusual to find him presiding at some

distinguished board of direction. Such a condition of reliable theatre traffic, either independently conducted, or through the channels of honest combination, free from the irregular practices of base monopoly and selfish gain, would eventually place the theatre in unquestioned repute as a public benevolence and educator, and would ever foreshow, an inheritance to others, and not alone tell, the mere momentary possession of individual personality and speculative flurry.

Number Three of "Stage Affairs," appearing January 29, 1907, concerns:

THE ACTOR:

THE QUALITY OF HIS IMPORTANCE.



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NUMBER THREE

JANUARY 29, 1907

STAGE AFFAIRS IN AMERICA TODAY

BY

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III.

THE ACTOR.

THE QUALITY OF HIS IMPORTANCE.

In the best type of American actor we find a person broad-minded, generous and charitable; of high intellect, becoming deportment and social import. He maintains with all a compliant nature, that attracts to him readily consequential men and women, ever demanding profit and entertainment from his companionship. In freely yielding to this condition, a serious devotion to a proper progression in his art must often necessarily be set aside, in surrendering to a few, the time, talents and nervous energy that should rather be constantly cared for, increased and expended on the many who make up the public to whom this actor must ever be a conscientious and faithful, albeit fearless, servant. It is in the condition of this type of actor — if self-devoted and determined to attain the highest approximate state of perfection in the pursuit of his art — that the American stage might easily claim, at least, a predictive condition of ex-

cellence, foretelling with great surety a future of exalted and permanent worth in the conduction of its truly useful and beneficial institution, the theatre.

There exists another type of actor in America. He emblemizes the quality shown in the vast multitude of vagrant incumbents lounging on the unsound, tinsel-frailty of an unseemly abuse of the institution and art, whose proper aims should rather stir them to an appreciation and effective use of the true resources and talents claiming a legitimate relation to the vocation that viciously they have slumped into. These men and women have no settled aim, no serious inclination. They entered into their calling with few natural attributes to recommend them, and they remain in it with few inclinations to pursue it, except to satisfy a mere sensual craving to be in it, and to enjoy the more or less unrestrained freedom and careless companionship that such a general nomadic life affords, regardless, and at the expense, of any expenditure of energy, and concentrated application of thought, to utilize their idle moments, and "resting" respites, towards elevating their conditions both as actors and as men. To this type of actor it is considered time enough to study a part when he gets a chance to play it. Then when the chance comes, he is more intent on playing it first, and studying it afterwards (if, indeed, he does even then). To get work is his all-absorbing thought. To receive remuneration his all-important necessity. The means by which he is to attain these conditions, and the question as to his qualifications to rightfully assume the practice of the essential demands made upon him as an artist, are of minor importance or of no consideration whatsoever. The matter of art in the con-

cerns of his stage career is hopelessly immersed in the constant strife for remuneration and the sensual desire to satisfy that condition through the alluring channels of stage life. He does not know, nor would he have the patience to endure the fact, that, if he properly prepared for his art and honestly practised it, the remuneration would be finally and securely awarded. But the actor is not wholly to blame for this existing state of his condition.

With the exception of a few names essential to the furtherance of pecuniary gain, the manager of to-day selects his cast much after the manner that he does the scenery, properties and effects of the play he is about to produce. The owner, author, director, or all three (whoever has the say), generally interviews the actors and actresses,—after days, sometimes weeks and even months on their part, of patient, or impatient, waiting,—looks them over, so to speak, and if they realize in personal favor, voice, looks and shape, the part under consideration, the possession or no of histrionic art is a matter of little or no consequence. If the vocation of the stage is to be considered a profession and acting an art, who can justly deny that the existence of such a condition as has just herein been cited, is not truly deplorable and somewhat discouraging, and indeed needful of attempted adjustment at least?

To-day the actor or actress possessing the advantage of an inheritance through relationship to prominent and famous antecedents is bought and sold in theatrical trade merely on the strength of that inheritance. This is not only an injustice to many more deserving actors lacking such advantage, but also, in many cases, a great injury to the human property thus

bartered by the greed of theatrical speculation. The inherent talent in these actors and actresses would, if quietly awakened, carefully nurtured and sturdily matured, assure much hopeful expectancy for the best purposes of the stage and its future exaltation. But no,—they are thrust into the glare and focus of high lights, fitted, sometimes misfitted, with a vehicle to expose their personal charms of youth, decoying eccentricities of manner, and by the time that they should have quite securely moulded their art into a form that proper preparation, progression, study and experience might chisel into images of special beauty, they are too often left neglected by the traders who bartered them, and by the public whose senses then have become all too surfeited. Broken toys in a deserted corner of the playhouse.

The actor in America to-day (and there are very few exceptions, even amongst the so-called "big ones") endures more, fawns and cringes, sacrifices intellectuality, temperament, and even manhood, to obtain and hold his position, a thousand times more than he would in any other employment or vocation under the sun. Every manager knows this and makes advantage of it. He doesn't disguise the fact; the actor can't. The actor to-day is relegated to the manager's "prop" list merely. He commands respect only as regards his use and durability. The quality of his importance is estimated, and he is also subjected to the same abuse and censure, or attention and praise, in a like manner as are the inanimate properties purchased to adorn the stage. And yet this same actor too often waits upon the manager as no serf does upon his king. Why? Because the actor has little or no consideration for his art for its

own sake. He prefers to earn his living by following the stage. He lives in hope that some lucky strike is going to bring him at once fortune and perhaps fame, and thereby reverse the quality of his importance. He has no proper, healthy estimate of the profession he would be a part of. He doesn't know, he doesn't care, nor will he recognize, that the actor's vocation is a profession, the practice of it an art. To him it is a business first and last. He, too, is a speculator. He is in the same game with the manager, and shows his hand at every play. The fault is here,—the actor lacks ideals and a true spirit of emulation. He lives, almost always, alone for the momentary prospect of pecuniary gain; seldom for the growing, lasting attainment of art gain. By forfeiting a respect for his art and its ideals, and confessing a disregard for the true spirit of emulation, he forfeits the respect of all the conditions and stipulations that surround that art and might tend towards his benefit. He does not justly respect his own condition, and consequently neither challenges nor deserves respect from others.

In this fact (a lack of ideals and the true spirit of emulation), almost solely, I believe, lies the cause for the failure of self-maintenance of the Actors' Fund of America. Therein lies, I believe, the stigma that blinds the path that might otherwise light the unobstructed way to self-supporting permanency of the Actors' Fund of America. A state that would allow its charity to exist unheralded, and unaided by the public whose purse and patience are perhaps taxed quite enough already. The gentlemen officiating for that Fund are pre-eminently equipped to efficiently discharge its business functions. It appears

they do most thoroughly with tact and unselfish labor; but notwithstanding, the president of the Fund in his annual report of May, 1905, makes this statement: "The only relief we have recourse to, is through the help of the actors and actresses; if they will contribute their small annual payments, as members of the Fund, it will then be placed above want; but we must allow for a large percentage of falling off, and so I presume the officers will have to continue organizing benefits from year to year." This is a condition that has existed for many previous years, and bids fair to remain unaltered. Reflect on that condition confronting a board of direction, for the most part business managers who are giving serious, arduous labor in the cause of charity, to benefit the condition of that same actor to whom they pay also a salary. Managerial skill, business tact, has not supplied, nor does it seem likely to worthily furnish, the deficiency caused by the neglect and failing duty of the beneficiary, — the actor. And he is not miserly; he is almost always generous, helping, charitable if thrown into environments of immediate necessity. But he lacks ideals and the beautiful spirit of emulation. He vies with the manager for pecuniary gain. "I'm in the business for the money," says the actor. Not one in five hundred or more admits he is in it for anything else.

Acting is an art! An intellectual occupation! The actor should, first of all, live and work for his art. Pecuniary gain is the manager's need. He can't exhibit art without it. The actor who professes his art alone for the "money there is in it," has no honest claim to its possession. He has no right to remain and clog the mainspring of the true motive of the



theatre; the art expression of human types and ideas. Such a one should be excluded from it. His place belongs to him who appreciates, and desires to the more appreciate, the true beauties of his art. Then, if the remuneration do not follow, he has not failed; and there awaits ahead to receive him, a home. It is what he has striven to make it. And when he has gained that home, there should be one thought uppermost in his mind: "I earned this; it is mine by right."

A word concerning the instilling of idealism in the actor through emulation of the fittest of his own craft. I speak with no ill-disposed intent to assail and belie the stage, its institutions or its incumbents. There is a society in New York City, which, in its appellative significance, is all that might be desired to convey in a single thought its motive for existence. Nearly all of the most prominent personages inseparable from the stage of America to-day are members of this society. That is to say, they lend distinction to its roll-call. Some few are active and more or less earnest and devoted workers in its cause. But, — the great unswaying membership (albeit they may be good companions, honest fellows, willing givers) appear like the restless, drifting, unintentioned seafarer, unpurposed in the true significance that the practice of his craft implies. And so with this majority membership (pleasantly edging and elbowing each other in their endeavors to reach the newest favor, or present the latest grievance), what magnet anchor hove within their harborage makes them fast? A chance of pecuniary gain. A society whose banner is of such declaration as is theirs should be free from any semblance of pecuniary inducements. At

its head should jet its sternest life and richest endowments to spray with precept, example, helpfulness and fraternity its component members. To the public that honors such, is owed a loyalty, it is true; but to the profession (the distinguished part of which they are), to that profession which in claiming them makes it possible for that public to honor them, they owe much more, — a sacred duty to keep it beautiful! to banish from its altar every odor that might debasely infuse the actor's sense and art, and then to spread the incense of idealism through emulation, that it should arouse the brotherhood of actors in America to the highest sense of duty to the art that they are privileged to profess.

The spirit of charity would then be embodied in this fulfilment. It would need no urging. The opportunities to pursue one's art would appear from out this consummation without the sense of trade. There then would be an end to that unstable engaging agency, wavering (in its bid for patronage from manager and actor) on an uncertain balance, ready to shift its weight in that direction which may best fulfill the immediate prospect of its purposes, and insure some future favor. A vicious need, breeding and maintaining jealousy, partiality and a woful lack of self-reliance. In the practice of this medium is seen no proper spirit, no special attempt of an orderly, systematic and just disposal of positions to be filled. Here preferments often go to those unworthy, incompetent, inexperienced, but who, nevertheless, through bonds of affection, social ties and favoritism, must be advanced in spite of the lack of any real merit, and often to the sacrifice of experience, ability and rank. These agencies swarm with idlers, possessing

no higher estimate of the institution they lie in wait to inhabit, than that it may give them the temporary indulgence of work, and thus fixes upon it a common condition, putting it in the same category with the multifarious forms of servility, whose individuals, to find their medium of activity, seek registration in the employment bureau.

The Brotherhood of Actors and the Actors' Fund of America should constitute a stanch and firmly welded union of two distinct, and yet inseparable, co-operate factors. The former confronts the animate joy of daily strife to maintain both; it seeks rest, comfort and happiness in the companionship and care of the latter. But the latter cannot be idle! They must help each other if they would hope to properly sustain the desired object of their union,—a self-maintenance of their home, freed from any sense or necessity of charity. The actor, entering upon his career, should become a material individual embodiment of that idea.

Something concerning the base intrusions that enter unjustly upon the actors' domicile. We often hear a spectator viewing a play make some such comment as this: "Isn't that just like ——" (naming some distinctive type of countryman in a Northern, Eastern, Southern or Western district of our own land; or perhaps some character of foreign locality and extraction). Such a remark is a compliment to the artist simulating that special character. Except in very few instances, to replace that artistic exhibition by substituting the native product, untutored in the art of dramatic personation, is to mar, by its crude realism, the just simulation of the original, that only the able exponent of characterization and expression

can truthfully reveal. It cannot be denied that in some rare cases persons associated with incidents in real life and employed to reproduce them on the stage, possess a sufficient degree of histrionic ability to be moulded into an acceptable representation of the events thus transplaced; but such cases are rare. Yet to-day in America we find the actors' vocation confronted by many such instances as referred to above.

Thus, many individuals who have attained prominence through various channels of notoriety,—by fistic skill, social scandal, sensational escapades, and many other means,—are sought and approached by managers who employ a certain crew of sensational playwrights, for the mere purpose of the base advantage that such irregular practices present for immediate theatrical speculation. Some of the notoriety thus bargained for may find in its committer a certain amount of native talent for the stage; enough to justify its use as a medium to transplace from life to mimicry the original participant and events transpired. Origin nor position should never prejudice promoter nor spectator, provided the incumbent is truly gifted with the attributes essential to an adequate exhibition, and if he has been properly educated to their most fitting use. But this condition is not often found. The exponent of such exhibitions as we have just referred to, is too often a person ill-mannered, uncouth, unlearned and unfit generally to be precipitated upon the scenes of an institution whose exponents should ever be men and women properly prepared and seriously inclined to promote at all times and to the end, the best purposes of the high mission it sets forth. The playwright who will hew and build out of, and around, such pulpos

material is a menace to society, as is the manager who exhibits it. As to the actors who engage in such brainless eruption, it would be wiser if they sought the field to till and hoe, than to become immersed in obscure publicity under the deluge of such lavarous verbosity.

It is not necessary to turn to the many apt illustrations of this abuse of the actor's art that constantly substantiate the truth of the foregoing remarks; but I am going to add a brief illustrative mention of the greediness of some managers to seize upon every opportunity of a possible enrichment of their treasury, regardless of the more lasting policy of encouragement to the highest degree of the vocations of playwright and actor. This avariciousness is generally cloaked in the disguise of "realistic touches."

Not very long ago a genial citizen, a humble layman (one who for nearly half a century was a loyal retainer and warm-hearted enthusiast of the thousands of men who have entered and pursued one of the highest institutions of learning in the world), was dissuaded, so it was reported, from the intercessions of endeared relationship by the selfish interests of theatrical venture, and was dragged from the natural stage of his simple triumphs, the truly realistic scene wherein he trod, to lend an unaffected touch of realism to an environment of artificial resemblance. Dazed by the glare of unreality, this merry old character who had had so unwisely forced upon him this strangeness, therein failed as totally as he had theretofore triumphed in the daily scenes of his untutored practice. Such a character developed and subjected to the art of simulation could not fail to obtain recognition by its introduction, if not in the vital motive of the play,

at least as an episodical adjunct. The manager placing upon the stage such incongruity is either ignorant of his obligation to the institution he would promote, or wilfully unheedful of its best protection, and of his proper duty to the actor in a just regard for the maintenance of the true quality of his importance. But not until the individual actor is brought to a fitting realization of his true quality of importance, and worthily adheres to it, can he ever expect to be highly judged and approved by others.

I am the actor's friend, always; but not often his sympathizer. To benefit his condition or his art tending towards high ideals and attainment, I would unceasingly bend my best endeavor, tire and wear every nerve in my body. In such devotion rests the idealism and true spirit of emulation that would embody in its own truth the fixed and lasting charge of the Actors' Fund of America. Optimism should be our faith, idealism our hope; the path we trudge to deserve these, — charity!

Number Four of "Stage Affairs," appearing February 5, 1907, concerns:

THE STAGE MANAGER,

HIS DECAYING POWER.

FEB 14 1907

A series of fifteen pamphlets issued weekly on Tuesdays
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NUMBER FOUR

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IV.

THE STAGE MANAGER.

HIS DECAYING POWER.

Except in a few rare instances, the stage manager of to-day (as that title is generally understood) is too often a person of small knowledge, less culture, little experience and weak ability when compared to what a proper estimate of that position should be and the positive qualities that its incumbent should possess. For this office (the undisputed executive head of the stage department of the theatre) should be selected a gentleman of sufficient years, experience, ability, learning and culture to at once command and hold the respect and concurrent obedience of all his co-laborers. While the stage manager, in the promulgation of his ideas and theories, and in an insistent exaction of a faithful practice of them, should always stand firm in the courage of his convictions, at the same time this condition should always be established and maintained through the legitimate outgrowth of requisite qualities (the possession of which

has gained for him his position), and never a mere assertion of his ideas, and, whether right or wrong, a rude enforcement of obedience through arrogant autocracy.

The stage manager should judiciously and with artistic discernment exercise the firm hand that distributes, develops and harmonizes the colors that have been selected for the picture. But he should never presume to make nor correct the substance of that color. Like the painter and the sculptor, he should select only properly prepared mediums, substantial colors and perfect forms, with which to animate his canvas or his marble. If the mediums through which he must work are inefficient and imperfect, he should cast them aside, and substitute others that are genuine. To attempt to make the former more fitting, or to correct their inefficiency, is not within the province of the stage manager. Unlearned and incompetent as he too often is in a proper distribution, development and harmonization — in an efficient handling — of the material, in the use of which he should otherwise be a master, for him to try to outstrip such ignorance by a presumptuous attempt to temper and improve the medium at his command, even if that medium be not efficient itself, is but to hinder and destroy any natural genuineness that its crudity may possess, and thereby render it far more unserviceable than originally found.

The stage manager should be the commissioned officer over trained soldiers; the accomplished conductor leading skilled instrumentalists. His care is the attainment of the nearest point to perfection in the ensemble. While he may suggest, and further enforce, a different rendering of some one part, at

variance with the instrumentalist's own conception, but done to more fully effect an harmonious whole, still it would be unpardonable effrontery to attempt to teach that artist how to play his instrument. He may discharge him if he is incompetent; but he must not rob him of that possession acquired through preparation, study and finish that has gained him the right to perform as a skilled part of the whole company, and bespeaks him an artist. But therein, lamentable though it be, lies the strongest weapon of defence in possession of a certain class of over-riding stage managers of to-day.

The actor suffers from such because in America there is no adequate medium of instruction in the art of acting of sufficient continuance in systematic training, or a proper condition of final judgment as to a competency of whether or no one may be allowed to rightfully profess the practice of the art of acting. In the absence of any such criterion the stage manager too often insists upon an automatic imitation of his own ignorance, mannerisms, limitations and pretence. But as this is generally done in the service, and under full sanction of some one still more utterly void of any sense of artistic proportions, the "bluff" goes, and the actor, even though he be possessed of infinitely more skill and taste than the awkward automaton he is made to copy, must surrender his intelligence, experience, and often his accomplished art to this person, who, in his desire to "make good" with the individual or company engaging him, ruthlessly unheeds the actor's superior ability, temperament and sensitiveness, and often jeopardizes any chance of artistic, and sometimes financial, success by the brazen enforcement of his charlatanical direction. Of course,

there is the other side to the question, but regarding the actor and his art I shall write at length in later chapters of this volume; let us here consider further the subject of the stage manager of to-day, his consequence, or, rather, inconsequence, as regards the general aspect of his office at the present time.

A company is organized and a play put in rehearsal under the supervision of a director, producer, actor-manager, or whatever he may be called. There has been engaged for the company a stage manager. Many times the "business" and "situations" of this play have been carefully thought out and arranged beforehand, and are subjected to few alterations during the progress of rehearsals. Many more times the play undergoes innumerable changes from first to final rehearsal. Sometimes, but not often, a play is, to a very great extent, staged by the intuitive instinct and impressionable imagination of the one in authority. This is rare, and, of course, hazardous and uncertain, but such cases have existed. During these rehearsals, the stage manager sits humbly at the supervisor's desk, manuscript in hand, altering the text here and there, changing "business," making notes of effects to be used and attended to "off stage," taking instructions and orders from the director concerning various matters, and when the actors have become "rough perfect," that is, have laid aside their parts, he facilitates progress by prompting them in their lines. He has observed the situations entailing the use of music and made himself acquainted with the curtain cues. In the management of many of these various duties he is obliged to, and does, when the regular performances have commenced, solicit the assistance of actors not on the stage engaging in the scene, and also the ser-

vices of the mechanics employed by the management of the company. Of course, this is absolutely necessary in all companies of any distinction at all. The stage manager often acts a part in the play; sometimes more than one, in theatrical parlance known as a "double." He assigns the dressing-rooms to the members of the company, and when a musical director is not employed by the company travelling, instructs the resident orchestra concerning the music used in the play.

All these duties in themselves, independent of the task of directing the preliminary rehearsals, are arduous, important and responsible ones, and when faithfully and devotedly performed worthy of deep respect and sufficient remuneration; and it is fitting that they should be incumbent on no inexperienced, unable, non-esteemed person. That they too often are is a condition in stage affairs to-day that is truly deplorable. The company opens its season. The one who has superintended the rehearsals generally goes along with the company until the play is running smoothly. At the end of that time the entire management of the stage is surrendered to the one regularly appointed to that position, the subject of our discussion in this chapter. In some instances we find a man sufficiently experienced, able, courteous, tactful and justly authoritative to gain at once obedience and commendation from the entire company. Such is a happy state indeed. But unfortunately this condition is rare, for too often this stage manager becomes the mean serving man of the business representative, the star, a relative, or some other one or two members of the company whose mean flatteries have readily swayed his meaner sense of equity. Or perhaps some one whose commer-

cial value has been particularly impressed upon him by the owners of the theatrical vehicle or combination in question, and to whom, in his total lack and disregard of any sense of justice or adequate possession of either stamina or intelligence, he equally fawns in mean design for personal aggrandizement. His conduct soon becomes a hindrance to honest endeavor and artistic purpose; an outrage on decency and manhood, and a base mockery to the highest meant significance that his title proclaims. To enumerate the countless ways that such a person may assume, in arrogant charlatantry and rank disposition, the duties of his office, would be a useless expenditure of time and to no profit in any direction whatsoever; but a general outline of such a one's duties, and his usual unfitness for them as contrasted to the highest results possible in an able conduction of them by a worthy incumbent, will not be superficial at this point of our endeavor to place simple facts and plain truths before our readers.

Nearly every company of any importance carries its own scenery. It is in the care and direction of a carpenter as regards its transportation and the process of setting and "striking"; that is, taking down and removing one scene preparatory to putting another in its place. The carpenter is under the jurisdiction of the stage manager as regards what shall be used in the setting of the stage, and in the distribution of the properties employed in the conduction of the scene. Once this information has been imparted and firmly settled upon, so long as the carpenter performs his work properly, the position allows of no interference, nor will its holder permit of any presumptuous instruction by the stage manager in the

discharge of his duties. It is so with all the mechanical departments of the theatre. That is right, and so long as the heads of these departments are men of serious purpose and mind their own affairs, and do not exert unwarranted officiousness in the discharge of their duties, and the stage manager is equally mindful of the proper conduction of his office, there is no trouble. This fitting balance is most desirable. But when it is wanting, the condition arising is most annoying.

Right here I wish to state that I believe in organized labor when done for the purpose of self-improvement amongst its individuals, and to maintain a rightful claim for protection against indifferent appreciation and ill-sufficient wages, and with the show of a respectful spirit of cheerful compliance with any sensible adjustment of differences that may arise from time to time between employer and employee. But for the union of organized labor engendered in the undue influence exercised by some too ambitious leaders, misunderstanding and often unheeding the fact that in all human strife there must ever exist an inequality in the distribution of worldly possessions, and not knowing, acknowledging nor striving to attain those attributes of character and gained understanding that would establish sooner any desired approximation to a genuine condition of social equality than the ready acceptance of unweighed vaunting, and in this misunderstanding suffering no thought nor reason to invade his mind to temper any sense of fancied injustice, and in his ignorant obstinacy ruthlessly stagnating the industry of another, perhaps at the peril of lives, and at last finding himself alone the greatest sufferer,—for such a union of organized labor, all

privileges of press and public, and high enforcement of law and order should speak out in unmistakable words of unretractable detestation.

It is not my purpose herein to fix in the mind of any reader the germ of anticipate disturbance foretelling eventual harmfulness to the best interests of the theatre. To the contrary, I would commend, in its main effectualness, the well-directed forces of the organized body of theatrical mechanics, and in the highest honesty of my deep devotion to the theatre entreat its followers to labor ever for the condition of harmony in their co-operate skill in embellishing the beautiful designs of the institution in which at the present day they play so prominent a part. It is with a desire to see this condition carefully preserved, that herein I would entreat this necessary adjunct to the highest development of the theatre to guard against and crush any evident and growing spirit of indifference to the attainment of best results by an over-zealous adherence to the too often unjust demands of the unionism of organized labor, albeit a sense of honest belief may pervade its unenlightened direction.

To-day when mechanical ingenuity in its varied forms, and "sensational features" dependent on the skill and dexterity of the mechanics furnishing and effecting them, play so important a part in the preparation and exhibition of a theatrical vehicle, and which are selected in many cases with greater care and labor than the artists to be employed in the revealing of the author's diction, it is not hard to understand that such responsibility, falling upon men saturated with the boisterous clamor of their associate constituency, should often lead to a condition of indiscreet conten-

tion and unmerited importance. At this juncture is most needed the presence of the stage manager in possession of the truly high qualities essential to the distinction of his office, encouraged and upheld by the business representative in whose hands is placed the protection of the property thus jeopardized. But it is seldom that either of the last mentioned two conditions is apparent.

The stage manager of to-day is in quality of service hardly more than a mechanic in degree of dignity as concerns the routine of his office. It may be truly said that the office often proves an immediate line of promotion from the grade of mechanic; for it exists to-day a trust of no real distinction in the direction of artistic accomplishment requiring exceptional intelligence, talent and refinement. The mechanic has at least served an apprenticeship, and in so far as his duties may extend is truly a skilled artisan. And so to-day instead of finding a man equal or superior to his environments in knowledge and culture, we too often endure a person lacking in all the essentials necessary to the proper solicitation of command, obedience and esteem from those over whom he is placed in authority. His views of the institution that sustains him, and of the profession for which he clamors pretended favor, seldom rise above a common understanding shared by the vast majority wavering on an indivisible condition that immerses in its nameless vapidty, the widely marked difference of the contradistinctive titles,—artist and artisan,—and that readily applies to every phase and promotive project of the theatre, the common term — business.

Thus, the actor of to-day, striving for anything high in the designs of the theatre, filled with a desire to

labor in a field of artistic endeavor, serious, studious and justly ambitious, is often overridden, unjustly censured, and many times openly insulted by this whiffling autocrat, void of any sense of justice or proper manhood, and totally incapable of, and indifferent to, any just appreciation of tact or discernment which might enable him to separate and properly estimate in individual effort the opposite qualities, — reality of purpose, and falsity of pretence, — and duly reward the one and rebuke the other. The petty indignities suffered through the injustice of many so-called stage managers, such as the imprudent distribution of dressing rooms and the attendant abuses, the evident partialities, the insults and rebukes publicly posted on the call boards of the visited theatre, and many other injuries inflicted by these busy officials, are too contemptuously distasteful to warrant the waste of a particle of ink. Often he gradually shifts many of the most irksome duties on to an assistant, and not infrequently to the property man of the company. Many times the transplacing of this power into such irrational, inexperienced channels, augments and aggravates the more the already too unbearable condition of abused trust.

A few years ago an actor of nearly sixty years' service on the stage (a creator of parts through forty years of New York reputation) was interrupted and reprimanded at a rehearsal most insultingly (by one of this class of stage managers) for an insignificant, inconsequential matter that bore no relation to any possible detriment to the play, nor author's intention of the part, that later was to be so masterly interpreted by this gentlemanly and finished old actor. The owner of the play confessed that this stage manager was

engaged solely through the astonishing ability he displayed in organizing and managing the stage departments of numerous amateur companies in a large theatrical centre. Among amateurs of any consequence at all, there exists an undeniable acumen, coupled with superior intelligence, culture and refinement that is sadly lacking in the average condition of the professional actor in America to-day, whose only grace is in the advantage of repeated performances which lend finally a desirable smoothness and finish. The amateur is afforded no such opportunity. It is not a surprising feat to guarantee a commendable performance by intelligent amateurs. The professional coach feels the superior environments surrounding the best amateur organizations. He dares not inflict upon these ladies and gentlemen the offences he unmitigatingly commits when succumbing to the condition of professionalism in stage affairs in America to-day. The reason is only too palpable. The general average status of the actor to-day does not compel his best deportment and manners, and he furthermore has not that just appreciation of tact and discernment to intelligently distinguish of their separate qualities.

Stage affairs in America to-day make it possible for a man to remain permanently in a large theatrical centre and superintend the production of plays alone. A few men do this work sufficiently well to win the encomiums of managers by supplying in the place of methodical arrangement, sane evolvment, logical development and artistic finish, a feverish tension of capricious ideas and whimsical actions; or by furnishing mean copies of indifferent originals. But most often the material furnished them is as feeble and inane as its producing agency. Anything of intrinsic

literary worth and high dramatic possibilities placed in such hands exposes at once their general unfitness for the sterling qualities of the position. It is through the encouragement to-day by monopolistic theatrical venture of this dualistic condition of inferior matter and inadequate producers that the high office of stage manager is now very nearly a lost power.

It is agreeable and of ready willingness to state, that during the past few seasons there has been installed in the office of general stage director, by one of the controlling powers of theatrical speculation, a man who is all that could be desired for the discharge of the true functions of the office of stage manager. Possessing the qualifications and superior talent essential to the best execution of such a position; trained and prepared in all the fitting and appropriate branches of the drama from its most classic form, standard models, highest comedy, to the lightest texture of farce; associated from his earliest theatrical life with the best tradition and experience could offer. Were the power through which he operates heedful or provident of the highest mission of the theatre, and this gentleman as faithful still to his ideals, the adherence to which has hitherto gained for him his distinction and maintenance, what a strife for good in stage affairs in America to-day might ensue! But judging by the few years through which this stipulation has worked, we can discern no ray of light that would herald a belief that the dawn that follows would spread into any bright day of glorious future for the best desired ends of the drama. We can not but believe that this adjunctive agent has been encased in the cogs of this great wheel (the power of whose machinery turns out drama as the mills the paper and

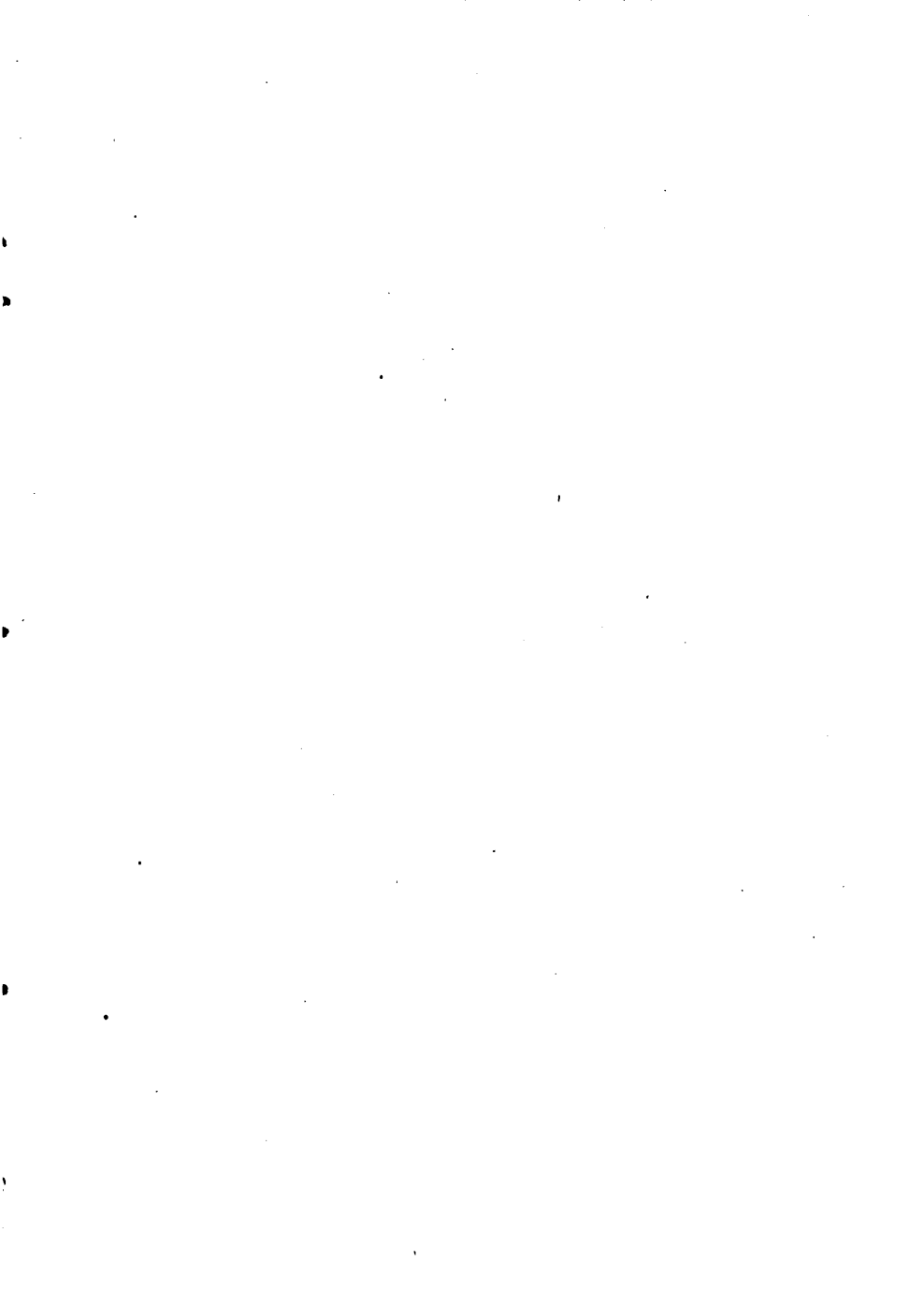
ink that sketch it), and that he has succumbed to the inevitable weakness that draws all minor factors into this to-day's common whirl of commercial greediness.

Call him what you will, — manager, director, supervisor, or any significant title, — it is not the mere nominal stipulation we would correct, but the constantly degenerating condition that is endangering a proper authority and essential dignity in the vital force of the stage department of the institution of the theatre. It is between the highest development of this force and the ablest endeavors through honesty and integrity of business efficacy that the just balance of theatrical exposition should ever swing.

Number Five of "Stage Affairs," appearing February 12, 1907, concerns:

THE THEATRE ORCHESTRA

ITS ENFORCED PROTRUSIVE OBEDIENCE.



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A series of fifteen pamphlets issued weekly on Tuesdays
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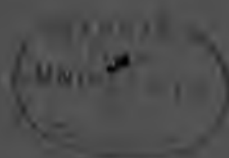
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FEBRUARY 12, 1907

STAGE AFFAIRS IN AMERICA TODAY

BY

ALLEN DAVENPORT



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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ance.
- No. 4. The Stage Manager. His Decaying
Power.

Stage Affairs in America Today.

—BY—

ALLEN DAVENPORT.

V.

THE THEATRE ORCHESTRA.

ITS ENFORCED PROTRUSIVE OBEDIENCE.

The theatre orchestra, under the leadership of a skilled, earnest and experienced director, is a most necessary and powerful adjunct towards the attainment of high results in the conduction of a theatre and its stage performances, and when its members are truly proficient and attentive to the proper discharge of their duties, they should at all times command the respect, sympathy and support of both business and stage authorities front and back of the curtain line. In all theatres of any distinction whatsoever, the orchestras are composed of instrumentalists who may with justification lay honest claim to the title—artist. These musicians have prepared, progressed and perfected their special art to that degree that truly entitles them to rightfully profess and practice it. Such attainment has been at the expense of many years of labor and a liberal expenditure of money. Truly, in an impartial estimate, can this be

rightfully said of at least nine-tenths of the actors in America today who are clamoring for place and recognition in the predominant element of the stage—the play?

Just so long as the musician properly maintains his special function, he should be held in proper dignity, consideration and credence. But the music should not, however, be any more than an adjunctive force, subservient to, augmenting and embellishing the chief feature of the theatre—the play. As such it is an important factor, and may readily add to, or detract from the general value of a play (according to the measure of its importance) by the congruity or incongruity of its connection, by a complementary or insufficient condition of instruments, and by the adequacy or insufficiency of its rendition. Too little importance is placed upon the condition of music in theatres in America today! Too little regard is shown for its congruity, completeness and adequacy as a necessary auxiliary for a better furtherance of the play. There are a few theatres where these conditions approximate satisfaction, and some travelling combinations worthily adhere to a high standard in the employment of music as an embellishment to the play, but with the great majority of managements the best functions of the orchestra are seriously impaired by an enforced protrusive obedience to the demands of the authorities in their estimate as to what the play requires and the public wants.

The theatre orchestra of today too often forsakes its proper office of graceful subserviency to vie with the predominant factor of the theatre, the play, in its contribution to the evening's entertainment. This is

true of orchestras in theatres of first-class distinction. Doubtless there are instances when both the material offered, and the quality of its rendition by the musicians surpasses in point of genuine merit that of the play and players. But the fact that the orchestra sometimes so outbids the stage performance in its intentional appeal for public approval, does not rightfully warrant a wilful usurpation of its proper uses, nor an insistent firmness on the part of the authorities in front to encourage and maintain such pleasing impudence. In my observance of stage affairs, I have seen few instances where any direct blame for the existence of the above-mentioned condition could be charged to the leader of the orchestra.

If appropriate entr'acte numbers have not been provided by the visiting company, the resident leader must select his own programme. And often in so doing he is instructed to play something lively between the acts; something to "wake 'em up." Consequently it is no uncommon occurrence to hear immediately before some act of serious import, religious solemnity or tragic awfulness, a potpourri of "popular airs" with a grand finish by the dexterous skill of the artist on the vulgarly pleasing xylophone, with the unescapable encore or two. It is a fact which cannot be gainsaid that renditions of that calibre are never rudely interrupted in an impatient desire to begin the next act. They are often highly enjoyed and appreciated even by the artistic authority who flashes the footlights, and who, at other times, cuts short at a most inappropriate measure some highly ambitious and worthy rendering by the musicians of the theatre, who in turn are often called upon to fill

in some tedious wait, which, although often unavoidable, is frequently occasioned by the irregular, untactful and self-centred practises of discontented, despotic and vainglorious stars and stage managers. To this duty the artists of the orchestra gracefully and otherwise comply.

But there is a palpable indiscretion and inexcusable offence habitually committed by the musicians of the theatre orchestra which is as unpardonable, and in view of the acknowledged condition of its subserviency to that of the player, more to be censured than any infringement made by the latter on the rights of the musician. I refer to the disrespectful and annoying custom of the musician in abruptly and unceremoniously leaving and returning to his desk during the progress and action of the play. It is often done at most inopportune moments, and with utter disregard and inconsideration for the actor. And no doubt to the small annoyance of the nearest auditors. His eagerness to seek the relaxation that the music room affords is equally as precipitate as is his hurried tardiness in resuming his desk, arranging his light and music, picking up his instrument, and as abruptly and unceremoniously resuming his task as he had left off with it. During the progress of the play, when not engaged in the performance of his duty, the musician's condition should be that of passive subordination.

I do not believe in the custom of orchestral selections between the acts of a play, and most especially when they partake of the wildest forms of incongruity, and ambitious proportions entirely out of all possibilities of the limited and meagre distribution of instruments. If a play be worthy of any consideration,

fitting music should be employed to truly embellish and beautify its theme and variations; and an orchestra of sufficient numbers and individual proficiency should be engaged to properly render its highest significance. And I believe that the functions of such an organization should be completely entrusted to the discernment of some capable leader, with untampered authority to adjust or augment the condition of his band to the highest requirements of the music to be employed. I believe in an appropriate overture to the play; fitting preludes to its acts; characteristic meaning and coloring to the incidental employment of music, and a foretelling suggestion, in the antecedent finales, prophetic of the catastrophe of the play; and then following, a subsequent condition of appropriateness in the arrangement of music that may serve the purposes of a postlude to a fitting finale in the musical accompaniment of the play. The intermission between the acts should be given over to a discussion of the play and players (or to such conversation as the auditor chooses).

Today the rude indifference to the serious efforts of the theatre orchestra between the acts is a mockery to its best intentioned purpose. Its present condition satisfies neither critical nor uncritical. Its proper functions are ignored and abused; and its condition of forced irrelevancy to the motive and action of the play makes it an adjunct more fittingly to be dispensed with by managers and actors of any sense of just proportions in dramatic exhibitions, than a worthy factor of embellishing import, indispensable to the highest designs of the play, and the natural medium of expression to keep in unbroken, harmonious continuity

its predominant theme. Today when all conditions tend towards marked and increasing facility in dexterously setting and "striking" the scenery, there is no excuse for long waits between the acts. There should be a decided tendency to shorten them, and by the assistance of fitting music, to more closely connect the incidents of the preceding act to that which is to follow, and so to neatly dovetail each separate part into one harmonious entirety. We should banish from further chance the unfair methods of the manager to eke out, by such protracted waits, an ordinary performance of an all too evident condition of briefness in his play. By dispensing with the long-established custom of an orchestral number, and to adhere instead to a reasonable degree of brevity, would stir the stage folk to the necessity of abandoning many whims and vanities, ill-moods and tempers that find an outlet in the abuse of the "between-acts" respite. And still further, it would encourage to better effort the working staff of the theatre, who often are censured for inactivity, but seldom considered when made to wait upon the idiosyncrasies of the sometime erratic stage folk.

I believe that the manager and actor owe to the public a proper adjustment of this condition of "stage wait." No longer should the orchestra be made the compellent go-between, in allaying this imposition by the interpolation of unsuitable selections, often to be briefly cut short without consideration or consistency. Exalt the music of the theatre and put it to some genuine worth! Maintain in the orchestra a complement of instruments that shall adequately and with congruity assist to preserve the continuity of the play

and enhance its worth. Its general purposes now as a divertisement to the play seem as incongruous and prodigal as would the introduction of miscellaneous readings by a band of elocutionists between the acts of an opera performance for the mere sake of variety. If opera managements can approximately control the "stage wait," dramatic authorities should be able to do likewise.

The orchestra should occupy its present location in the theatre, but be sunk lower, and obscured from the audience by a portable partition, oval shape, rising from its outer floor border, and curving until it meet and join the level of the stage, where apertures should be supplied, immediately front and back of the foot-lights, to sufficiently convey the volume of tone necessary to the demands of dramatic effectualness. A code of incandescent light signals governing the cues (red for "warning," white to "take up," and blue to "leave off," with speaking wire for accompanying instructions as to tempi and other varying music forms) should be established between the stage manager and orchestra leader. That is all stage detail, and should be placed in the responsible care of its proper authority. The vicious custom of "flashing the foots," and sometimes audibly instructing the leader from the stage, should be totally eliminated. Any vocal selection employed in the action of a drama should find its accompaniment in the environments of the stage scene wherein it is introduced. In the event of opera performances, this portable partition could readily be removed to preserve the essential relation between conductor and singer, and to give full scope to the predominant element of all genuine opera, — its

music, as heard through the art of composer, singer and musician, to which must ever remain in subservience the necessary adjunctive elements of dramatic action and stage display. The manager makes no hesitancy in placing the orchestra under the stage to add a few miserly dollars to his treasury when extraordinary business is being enjoyed. Why not do it for all time, and do it *right*? As the orchestra is arranged now, more tact should be used in arranging the music of the play, or the leader be empowered to engage extra musicians when music is to be employed both front and back during the progress of any one act in the play. As it exists now, it remains a custom impolite, clumsy, and disturbing, and the orchestra in the foreground is a blemish to the highest approximate attainment of illusiveness in the stage picture, claiming as it does the fencible ground, that must of its slightly importance, arrest a complete visual access to the play.

The exhibition and maintenance of rational musical entertainment, as a balance to dramatic divertisement, is as desirable and needful to a healthy condition of the theatre, and a counteractive benefit to the community, as is the reciprocal wise distribution of sunshine and rain to the land and its inhabitants. But an over-oppressiveness of either is, beyond argument, injurious, and when that oppression partakes of a lavatarous form of severity, it is dangerous, and often deadly. The stage today sizzles with lavatarous musical matter. It is alive with disordered precipitantness from unaccountable sources. There should be a standard of special qualification required of the composers and interpreters of musical entertainment. Today it is, for

the most part, in the hands of empiricism. Composers, singers, actors and conductors alike. There are, of course, a few exponents of these vocations, particularly in the cases of composer and conductor, who find justly merited recognition and employment for their skill; but the general condition of vocal and comedy effort is in a very distorted state of impoverishment. The condition of the material they labor to interpret is partly to blame for this. There are numerous concocters of these so-called musical comedies, posing as composers, with no fundamental knowledge of lyrical or musical composition, or an ability even to write on the stave a simple melody (sometimes not even with the aid of an instrument). He must seek the services of a trained musician. Although there are still many capable conductors being maintained by first-class managers, there are nevertheless many who can claim no more right to their position than an incomplete knowledge of the technique of the piano might grant them. And yet such boldly presume to train singers and direct skilled musicians. And all these conditions find favor and encouragement with the theatrical speculator. This state of affairs can not be corrected until the manager assumes his trust honestly, and admits of no solicitations to his offices that have not qualified for their separate arts. How can there be rational musical entertainment and light opera when the arts of composer and singer (their predominant forces) are usurped by the charlatanry of unqualified substitution, and the comedy supplied mostly through the mediums of freakishness, vocal and acrobatic contortion, coarseness and impossible dialects? The only intrinsic conditions that keep such a flimsy *melange*

from hopeless disjointment are the qualified arts of musician, scene painter and skilled mechanic. The theatre today is indeed a "show business."

In concluding this chapter I mention briefly a condition existing in the fraternal body of musicians which threatens to impede and stay the best aims of its individuals, and through such enforced stagnacy, must slowly, but constantly, corrupt the entire body. The musician of the theatre today, be he of mediocre quality or of superior worth in the exhibition of his art, is seized, held and driven by the despotic hand and lash of unionism. He may be of exceptional merit, and most essential to a high order of music in the theatre, and still be held momentarily subject to the arrogant dictatorship of a man many degrees his inferior, but possessed of the power to jeopardize another's living by an unreasonable enforcement of this power, thus compromising the other's standing, restricting the freedom of his art, and placing upon the finer vocation of the musician the same menial condition of dependency and subserviency in common with many lower and coarser fields of labor, whose ranks are mostly filled with unfortunate men, ignorant of the flimsiness of the standard they are following, and stubborn in their determination to remain thus unenlightened. The musician can never expect to find in the honest promoter and patron of art, just appreciation, sympathy and support, so long as he binds himself to the fetters of narrow dictation which seeks to unjustly interrupt and restrict the privileges, practices and freedom of his art. Such a condition can react but temporarily to the embarrassment, inconvenience and injury of that same promoter and patron,

— the benefactors of the individual submitting to such injudicious jurisdiction of salaried meddlers. The subject of such gullibility loses most, and often all. A man becomes but an ass in leading-strings in giving heed to such impromptu knavery. He is unworthy to adorn any art, especially one whose sphere of activity is universal, and in the proper devotion and practice of which his own self-reliant and individual worthiness alone should control the highest and wisest desire for the exercise of its proper functions.

Number Six of "Stage Affairs," appearing February 19, 1907, concerns:

THE DRAMATIC CRITIC.

THE RIGHTFUL CENSOR; BUT NOT MERELY BY "COURTESY OF THE THEATRE."

MAR 5 1907

A series of ten pamphlets issued weekly on Tuesdays
from January 15 to April 23, inclusive

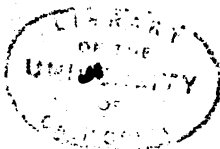
NUMBER SIX

FEBRUARY 19, 1907

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BY

ALLEN DAVENPORT



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

P. O. BOX 1341

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- No. 5. The Theatre Orchestra. Its Enforced Protrusive Obedience.
- No. 6. The Dramatic Critic. The Rightful Censor; But Not Merely by "The Courtesy of the Theatre."

Stage Affairs in America Today.

—BY—

ALLEN DAVENPORT.

XII.

THE DRAMATIC SCHOOL.

ITS FUTILE RESULTS.

There are some academies of dramatic art in America, which in a wishful serious intention to prepare men and women for the profession of acting, possess many virtues. They employ studies with fundamental principles, expounding to a creditable degree, through stages of proper progression, a general outline of the expressions chiefly to be employed in the art of acting. These schools certainly do no positive harm; and would, perhaps (if sought by men and women possessed with a desire to work patiently through a more extended course of instruction), accomplish worthy things, if—provided a fitting medium reciprocating, fostering and maintaining, to a substantial degree, the preparatory intentions of such academies, colleges, schools of oratory and dramatic art, and so eventually might prove of some positive benefit to the institution of the theatre and the true cause of dramatic art.

There is another class, however, a vile abomination masquerading under the name—school of acting. At the head is generally to be found a man or a woman, retired, often forced from active service, now seeking a living by ruthlessly transmitting to stage-struck men and women (under the guise of dramatic instruction) the mannerisms, defects, ignorance and (often times) illiteracy,—baneful conditions that “years of experience” have generally magnified the more,—of himself (or herself), and untutored assistants, not hardly one of whom has ever had a respectful care for the true significance of the art of acting. And they form the faculty, if I may ab-use the term, of a school of dramatic art. These schools generally charge a tuition fee of about four hundred dollars for a term of six months’ duration, three hundred of which must be deposited in advance, the other one hundred at the expiration of one-half of the term. Did these schools accomplish anything towards advancing the pupil to a desirable preparatory state to enter the profession of acting, we would have little to say; but they do not, and it is unreasonable to suppose they ever could.

I know from personal acquaintance, and through information gained from many of the pupils (by their voluntary confessions), the existing conditions in these schools. An instructor in one volunteered this brazen conviction:—“I’ll tell you how I handle ‘em. I stand ‘em up in front of me, and say,—now you act and talk just as though you were in your own parlor,—that’s all acting is.” Confessions from the pupils of these schools verified the above statement. The “methods” of other instructors are equally as incomplete

and wholly dependent on the pupil's crude aptness. They provide themselves with play books; parts are assigned to them, and they are given to understand that in the mere confused rehearsing of them they are getting a practical sufficient preparatory stage training in the ridiculously short space of a few months, in ill-fitting environments, and under the willing direction of men and women who, of course, must know too well the presumptuousness and impossibility of any one attempting, under such conditions, to impart a preparatory knowledge even of the art of the actor.

These schools are glaring examples of obtaining money under false pretences, and of the unreasoned actions of many men and women to quickest feed their feverish germs of "stage struckness." In the majority of cases, young men and women who enter these schools are literally defrauded of their money, and finally left as destitute of an immediate prospect of a stage career as though they had never forsook the cheery comforts of home, then minus these comforts plus the unavoidable discommodiousness and disturbances of boarding house life. Or else, and more to be censured and less to be pitied, they miss their sole purpose in courting one of these schools,—to get on the stage, not to study a great art.

To become proficient in the arts men and women must prepare and study for years to gain such advancement, and to attain a desired finish to their studious efforts. Acting is an art! Its incumbents carve the inscription—artist. Yet what do they studiously endure to deserve it? The sculptor, the painter, the musician, the instrumentalist pass years in study to

rightfully claim the appellation—artist. They must possess natural inclinations for their art of course, but where that stops their work begins, if they would become artists in the cultured sense of the term. To be sure it is not always necessary to study to be able to play “tunes” and “jigs”; but you must if you want to play something more. The stage is strewn with men and women who can play only “tunes” and “jigs,”—and then not always do they play in tune. Such have no right to profess an art of which they have no careful knowledge, nor ambition to seek the means to procure one, nor even a desire to so do!

Over twenty years ago a movement was started in America to “reform the drama.” Its immediate scene of action was at a theatre in the vicinity of Broadway and Twenty-third street, New York City. This reform was to be effected principally through the instilling into the incumbents of the company at this theatre, and the pupils of its preparatory school, the teachings of a truly great philosopher, and his discovery and revelations of laws governing man’s expressions. The direct intent of the introduction of this system (as opposed to established methods of other theatres) was, to quote from an official on the business staff of the first named theatre, to pit “brains against experience—intelligence against traditions”; and its confident hope was, to again quote and now from an authority in the art department of this theatre,—“the development of a new stock of actors”; and to quote further, “the novice accomplishes now in two years what was done by the old actor in fifteen years.” Here let me say that the mention of this system is intended only in so far as

it may serve to the more fittingly connect the facts I am about to state, and not in any manner intended to gainsay the inestimable value of that great teacher's wonderful revelations when viewed as philosophy, and pursued as such.

Employed under the proprietorship of this theatre, as its executive head, was a gentleman who has since risen to notorious individual distinction in the affairs of the American stage. He was assisted by his two brothers, one of whom today shares at least an equal, if not a greater position of distinction than the one first mentioned. It may be truly said that the greater part of the history of the "theatrical doings" of the last twenty years in America is the history of the "ventures" of these two gentlemen. The stage manager of this theatre (and what the term truly implies) was a talented personage, who today stands, in the true significance of the word, a stage manager pre-eminent: and in so far as his judgment and practice has allowed him to proceed, an exceedingly wise one, in that he ever unerringly selects foundational colors secure enough upon which to rest the textures of his varied technical and architectural skill.

In connection with this theatre was another gentleman—cultured, learned; working (as we have no doubt) ideally, honestly and enthusiastically at that time. He was termed "dramatic director," and also "dramatic scientist." This gentleman had (to quote again),—"the sympathy and co-operation" of the proprietor and the executive head of this theatre. Since the inception of that theatre, in its honest purpose to "reform the drama," and up to the present hour, this

gentleman has been virtually (if earlier with an occasional change of base) at the head of an academy of dramatic arts, and receiving throughout its existence,—"the sympathy and co-operation" of the great power which has held for many years, by its managerial prominence, the best patronage which the theatre can boast. Into the channel of this controlling power, this much coveted medium for histrionic endeavor, might freely enter and abound,—the "brains" that were to offset "experience," the "intelligence" that was to take the place of "traditions,"—conditions which were to effect in time "the development of a new stock of actors."

Throughout the evolution of this movement begun over twenty years ago to "reform the drama," and to the present time, not one name of any special worth or permanent continuance has been supplied through the medium of such academy of dramatic arts fostered by the sympathetic and co-operate help of the most prominent and energetic managerial force of the time. The many names of histrionic splendor that illumined the daily records of the stage at the inception of this reformation of the drama have mostly passed on to stage history, and there inerasable stand, casting honor and distinction on the American stage by the highest development of their talents attained through rightfully pursued long experience, and a sane adherence to the best traditions properly adjusted to the present environments, constantly promoted and bettered by a rational application of "brains" and "intelligence" put to their highest uses at all times. They required learning; they became scholars,—self-thoughtful, educated men and women.

"The development of a new stock of actors" by dramatic science, wherein "the novice accomplishes now in two years" by brains and intelligence "what was done by the old actor in fifteen years" by experience and traditions, has not been accomplished; the desired resultant condition of these combined forces working in "sympathy and co-operation" is not in any way apparent. A new stock may have been developed, but it exists only in a degenerate state of histrionic ancestry in its inefficiency to cope with the brain exertions and thoughtful intelligence necessary to strengthen experience and to properly adjust the present conditions to the best traditions of the stage in an adequate exposition of dramatic art.

If this bond of "sympathy and co-operation" has been an honest one there can be no disgrace in the failure of its purposes. But if one part of its stipulate force, in its flight for ideals and reformation in the drama, may have surrendered and succumbed to the managerial conduct of its sympathetic and co-operate ally, knowing the impossibility of promoting and advancing art through the channels of that ally's supreme spirit of commercial monopoly, then such an academy of dramatic arts is no more than an institution advertising and existing first and all-important for mere pecuniary gain, draining into the cesspool of degenerate histrionism any willing substance that may be caught in the vortex of its commercial whirl. Its mission, speaking through its non-resultant effects, has become worthless; and through its inability to regenerate a worthy stock of actors, bespeaks its unfitness either way,—through the failure of its honest endeavors to carry out

its original design, or through its subservience to an improper medium into which it may graduate its pupils,—and holds no boast to any reformation of the drama.

The so-called “school of dramatic art,” the very essence of hopeless futility, should be declaimed into the refuse of its self-spoken worthlessness!

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ACTING.

ITS TANGIBILITY AS AN ART TO BE STUDIED.

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BY

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Stage Affairs in America Today.

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XV.

THE NEW THEATRE.

A SUGGESTION REGARDING THE PERMANENT EXALTED-
NESS OF THE STAGE.

The establishment and stable maintenance of a national or municipal theatre in this country is unreasonable to suppose. Existing political conditions do not permit of the conduction of either for the best desired purposes of the drama. We must look to the endowed theatre. But of what avail is such a theatre to the future of the stage if there is no condition of *qualified* substantiality required to enter, promote and maintain it? The endowed theatre then stands for no more than any other kind.

A theatre under endowment should be a dramatic art institute with a standard of approximate highest attainment, by means of which to encourage, advance, and uphold the best designs of its workmanship ; and upon which to base criticism, stimulate taste, create discriminate judgment, and so advance amicable discussion with tendency to harmonize opinions on stage representations. This theatre of dramatic art should,

at all times, through its official independence to furnish suitable entertainment, beneficially persuade, amuse, and instruct. It should indeed, "Show — virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and — the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Such a theatre should encourage and promote, in first importance, any native productiveness of qualified worthiness. Then, the testedly valuable dramatic literature past and present. These should be exhibited in consistent proficient art form, reflecting a pure native diction from the plainest speech to the most highly cultivated, from the commonest dialogue to the sublimest poetry. The strong characters of all periods should be personified therein,—their customs, virtues, vices, foibles, sentiments, etiquette, dress, etc.,—sufficiently depicting, as approximately as mechanical device and artist's brush will permit, the locations and scenes in which these characters lived and acted. It should acquaint us with their history and religion, and as far as it may be practical, display something of the arts and industries produced during their time. What one sees and hears from its stage should become at once for him, a criterion of what is best, proper and correct.

Furthermore this theatre should, at its inception at least, through its exclusive election and controlling agency, permit of independent managements of first class presenting to the public that of the highest merit in current vogue and favor, of melodrama, comedy-drama and farce. It should also entertain such foreign matter as may be of desired literary and artistic value, and intellectual profit. We could not too forcibly, in the beginning at least, urge this condition of independent amicable relationship with its worthiest

companions. It is in an eventual natural conjoining of such matured worthiness and increasing healthiness, that we must heal the dismembered form and restore its essential symmetry.

The influences exerted and benefits to be derived from endowed theatres should not be restricted merely to any one locality, theatrical centre, but spread as widely as possible throughout the length and breadth of the land. Their work should be carried beyond the immediate district which serves as their home. They should extend their influence over a circuit of the more important cities about the centre in which their home theatre is instituted.

The theatre, to bring its mission to the highest fulfilment, must be wrested from the lacerative commercial lash that now forces its art bondage, and liberated by the revolutionary installation of men and women who have studiously and zealously prepared for the practice of their art, and have been equably graduated to it through some significant qualification. What is truly worthy in the theatre today cannot be deposed. It will maintain itself by virtue of its genuineness. But it must be weeded of carrion parasites, or suffocate in their gathering stench. And if the endowed theatre shall ever stand for any intrinsic intention, a new stamen must be rooted, and evolved through a higher education for the actor, furnishing a qualification, and creating a status that shall attain a degree proclaiming some unquestionable certainty as to its holder's privilege to practice the accumbent of his studious preparation. There must be an honored and openly respected "profession of the theatre." There must be a required high qualification to practise it, secured through an educational system of procedure

for playwright, manager, and actor, graduating them into a medium of activity at once distinct, sympathetic, and co-operate with the constancy of their preparation. I merely suggest that it might be accomplished by a combined complete course of educational import in the dramatic literature of Shakespeare, and through elementary conditions of the art of playwriting, and by progressive studies of the plays most adaptable to a preparatory state of the art of acting; fundamental knowledge of play building and dramatic expression. Out of this qualification would come the status to dignify the "profession of the theatre," the playwright-actor-manager, the co-essential forces to work efficiently and harmoniously to uplift the institution their unity forms. That is the "profession of the theatre."

And (to quote from the opening paragraph in number one of *Stage Affairs in America Today*) "the playwright is the very heart of this tri-essence, and should (its other co-essential factors working all in trinitarian confederacy) pulsate into vigorous life and health the substance which this vital union shapes, — the institution of the theatre." But we do not gain-say the just importance of manager and actor. Notwithstanding it would be as absurd to try to elevate the theatre through the offices of endowment by the mere supplying of good actors and sagacious business managers, as it would be to attempt to perpetuate the cause of music by solely educating to a high degree its interpreter — the instrumentalist, and instating efficient business capacity to direct him. Of what intrinsic avail are they without a supply of accomplished and worthy composers? Of what use are good actors without good plays to put them in? They are

like a winning crew in a rotten shell. And how is it possible for an endowed theatre, directed by an individual not in harmony or sympathy with the vital spirit of its high intentions or cognizant or educated to the true quality of the actor's importance, to properly maintain the beneficence of its mission? It could not properly so do.

It would seem presumptuous anticipation, just now, to outline any systematic plan for the orderly conduction of such an endowed theatre. It would take many years to primarily determine, and eventually bring the stipulated conditions to a state of useful fixedness and realization of their just importance. But I would like to say this much, that, in the anticipation of so feasible a scheme, and in such an expansive country as ours, would seem necessary at first, an agreeably united, and quite general movement in universities, colleges (and perhaps specially appointed academies of dramatic art), throughout the eastern, western and central centres of the country. A sympathetic chain. The matter of endowed theatres in which to engage such qualification could progress as the preparatory condition seemed to rationally warrant. These theatres should be under the control of a learned board of direction ; to independently make its special appointments of playwright, manager and actor to its individual controlment, but sympathetically in general purpose and result. But the duties and authorities of playwright, actor and manager should be clearly stipulated and duly respected, and not to be interfered with by such board of direction, except in the event of some misdemeanor, laxity, or inefficiency of office. Then such board of direction assumes the authority to dismiss or regulate such disorder. And the separate offices of

playwright, actor, and manager should know some determined distinction and individual duty which should be rigidly adhered to in harmonious and sympathetic workmanship, and, between themselves, signally and equally understood and respected. In case of inevitable disputes that ever arise from time to time in associations of all arts and trades, this board of direction again assumes the position of authority and seeks to regulate such unavoidable differences.

All these departmental conditions should be embodied originally in a single bond of *organization* governing all theatres under such endowments, and receiving the same specified graduation of this equable *qualification*.

Endowed theatres of permanent abode, having regularly instated companies, should importantly maintain a playwright. More than one if so wished. The playwright should be under no undue constraint to furnish plays for these theatres, but of course there should be some compulsory determination to the task. While employed in translations, adaptations, revisions, etc., he should find opportunity, freed from all pecuniary worry, to properly engage in the enjoyment of original composition. In the production of such he should receive just consideration, assistance and protection from the theatre engaging him, and be allowed the unrestrained privilege of privately controlling, and elsewhere universally exhibiting, his workmanship should it prove worthy of such wide attention. But I believe his labor belongs first to that institution which harbors him. At that hour when his art is universally accepted, his own individualism must assert its supremacy, and naturally sever his bond of constraint.

The theatre to find its highest ends must enlist a condition of genuine seriousness and consequent respect in a qualified class of playwright studied and learned mostly in a *diction* of sufficient *metrical form*, *lucidity*, and *pointedness* to bespeak a language *intellectual*, *elegant* and *effectual* in its *simple*, *intermediary*, and *sublime* uses. Thereon may the actor build his art. But that actor cannot properly so do unless he himself has gained that same studied and learned discipline which may enable him equally to mentally grasp and expose such essential predominance. It is the vital storage force which contains the variety of expressions possible, and inspires the effort to reveal such. I do not gainsay the value at all times of embellishing pantomime, gesture and effective "business," if rationally and thoughtfully employed. They are the necessary "tricks of the trade." But too often they are used irrelevant to the significance of the context, with extravagant, meaningless purpose; often nothing more than a deceitful condiment to an unpalatable hash, which can delude only the unfastidious taste. The unmitigated viciousness of many play builders to obscure, in the substitution of over-laden mechanical devices, strained situations, and effective(?) "business," their total inefficiency to write decent compositions, and the dangerous peril caused by managers ever greedy to exhibit them, provokes a state of constant injury to the theatre, the art it should uphold, and to the social condition they have the power to promote.

The theme and construction of a play are the foundation upon which it rests. They afford the preliminary essentials upon which to build. Their principal requisites are form and regularity. It is

not difficult to provide either. In contemplating the construction of an edifice we sometimes appropriate this form and regularity directly from natural sources ; oftentimes we transplace from former fundaments. But what is the predominant character that gives to this edifice usefulness and beauty? Its architectural design. That which bespeaks its grandeur. We often take from natural sources the theme for our play ; sometimes we transplace from former fundaments. The greatest have ever done so. We have then but to construct with a sufficient degree of regularity. But to raise this structure to loftiness of character, to usefulness and beauty, that is, if we would truly proclaim its splendor, we must seek the studied, varied and imaginative skill of architectural design,— the cultivated art of lofty diction ! Without this gradiloquence, action, “business” and “effects” are but the mere trumperies we might hang on our cellar walls. They do not signify the vitality of the playwright’s workmanship.

Few playwrights of today hold the dominant type of manager in any special regard except in a servile struggle to secure a hearing, which, when once obtained, and a measure of success assured, most often reverses the conditions. Except in a few cases where the actor becomes highly necessary for the furtherance of pecuniary gain, he commands no respect and little consideration from either playwright or manager. And yet this same actor, although loudly denouncing the dictatorial exercise of both the former, continually stoops to the meanest services to obtain audience and favor. And both playwright and manager have arrogantly transplaced the substantial art of the stage manager by the whimsical substitution of their pecun-

iary interest. "It is my property which is at stake," cry they out. It is no wonder then that the "high-salaried paraders" in the "show business" today assume a "warrantable" attitude of superiority, indifference, and often disobedience towards the poor little man who suffers their presumptuousness, disrespect, and commandments while "ringing up" and "ringing down" the curtain, and sees the importance of his office merely in the type of the programme sheet, which innocently accords him the post of "stage manager."

In a just organization of the theatre there should be no falter in the estimate either of his executive command over the artists he directs, or of their respect and concurrent obedience to him. The stage manager should be the paragon of actors. Then the scenic artist and musician, the costumer, the wig maker, and the skilled mechanic shall feel an honestly acquired condition rightfully asserting its predominance, and they also will obey and respect it. And these shall be worthy of their hire,—the artist and the artisan. That condition of "local stage manager" in theatres throughout the country having no stationary company, should be known by some such appropriate title as "foreman."

The *palmy days* of the theatre convey scarcely any more meaning than the passing through of certain periods in the affairs of the stage when a greater number of distinguished players, "stars," have flourished than in the intervening years. Such is only a natural phenomena peculiar to all phases of employment. It is just as common to learned vocations as to all others, but is seen less in such from the very fact of that existing necessary state of compulsory discipline which

ever tends towards a general equalization of all original crudeness that must quite nearly, alike yield to the mouldable process of education. The theatre, in the possession of such continue solidity, need no longer wait upon the inconstancy of histrionic phenomenon for its exaltedness. Equitably qualified, the actor enters an organization which shall respect and guard the just significance of such equity. If he be peculiarly fitted to predominately attract and shine, to be a "star," he will there find his special preferment as readily as does in his special sphere, the signally gifted clergyman, attorney, or physician. There, we must confess, each might feel a dominating desire for pecuniary gain in the pursuit of his vocation, but he could not lay claim to the right to practise that profession without first having undergone a compulsory preparatory discipline. And he very soon knows that he cannot rest secure alone on that primary condition, even in his eagerness for ample remuneration.

To call the theatre a profession has been from the beginning, and is today, presumptuous vanity. It never has, and does not now, demand of its incumbents any compulsory state of disciplinary learning. Its ranks have ever been, and still are, carelessly recruited from every condition of life; from tutored refinement to illiterate degradation. And thus disorderly intermingled, with frictional unnaturalness, such vainly labor to assimilate their opposite moods into a regulated quality that they would name—a profession. It is an utter impossibility under such a laxity of any attempt to exact a condition of learned qualification, to ever raise the theatre to the dignity of a profession. Schools of acting, systems of training, even practical stage experience, brought to the highest state of pro-

iciency, cannot in themselves alone elevate the stage one jot. Its incumbents must know that disciplinary preparation which furnishes a proper qualification to be justly recognized and unswervingly upheld by the institution that requires it. Then we have a profession as rightfully claimed, and as respectfully viewed as any that finds its inception in the fostering care of our learned institutions.

How can lasting good evolve out of an institution where scarce a voice from within ever has, or does sincerely say,—“Young man, young woman, enter here; for there is no chosen field of labor that can so earnestly entreat your highest character, honesty, and culture!” How can increasing good evolve out of an establishment wherein its greatest light, enjoying the cheering sense of vast remuneration, public applause, and personal gratification, takes up his pen and abhorrently counsels the young aspirant (who has earnestly besought his advice) to seek any occupation else under the sun where he might gain a bare “living” rather than go upon the stage? Or again,—wherein an overtowering intellect, bequeathing honored distinction to his country through rare idealism, talent, and devotion to his art, sighs in his greatest hour that he had not rather directed that mental force towards some vocation truly worthy? Search among the living to-day! Hear—in the retirement of every luxury—the wails of the mightiest histrionism sorrowing for the sad condition of the noble art of acting. Read (with rare exception) the disparaging, and too often discouraging notes sounded from our “foremost notables” to the graduates of dramatic schools. I will not go on indefinitely, but only add my own modest decrual.

Before I entered upon a career of professionalism (ardently ambitious, devotedly serious, and studiously inclined) not one voice inside or outside the realms of the theatre would or did utter a sincere word of encouragement to wisely spur me on to such a rashness. Associating and studying with actors justly recognized and famed throughout two continents, daily clerking in a generally considered desirable and genteel business among gentlemen highly esteemed and respected, continually seeking and being sought by amateur dramatic and operatic societies of acknowledged abilities, notwithstanding, never did I find a voice who dared applaud in me the thoughts of a stage career. Inside and outside the theatre world, but one opinion in general was held of that institution by both wise men and fools,—that it was a *rotten* business. I did not believe it. I entered this state of reputed histrionic putrefaction. I became an actor, enduring all environments which voluntarily unlocked their doors to me. Alas! I have seen, lived, and vindicated the *truth* of all such admonitions. My unrestrained apology lies herein. Friends,—you were right! The theatre is a rotten business. But I as unrestrainedly proclaim that I do not believe it need be so, and that with all of you I shall hope to see, live, and vindicate in the future the falsity of that present truth.

Let us then with hope, work, and patience sow the seeds of truth and beauty that shall some day flower forth in such abundance as to cast the fatal gloom of quick decay on these weeds of falsity, corruption, and vulgar show. Unflinchingly take our stand and justly fight against the intrusion of ignorance, dishonesty, and pretence into the domain of increasing beauty. Let it not be a common mart for vulgar trade! A cur-

tained refuge for avaricious exploitations of sensationalism, scandal, and vulgar notoriety. Neither a corrupt exchange where monies and titles of unbalanced impressionability may purchase into the lime-light of ill-repute debasements of a worthy title, to which, although they hold no true and skilful right, they clamorously claim possession. Nor let it sink into a carnal agency to furnish lavish idlers with tender toys, and so crushing the hope of some trusting heart, destroying all faith, affection, sensitiveness; and perhaps inflaming them to such jealousy and insanity that might lead to fatal indiscretions that no technical legal mastery ought atone for.

We know that the stage will never be free from many vicious qualities, besetting evils; all professions however honorable in their highest calling possess them; but to a great general satisfaction, methodical organism, qualification, and the establishing of a status—a criterion for dramatic art through higher education—would rid the theatre of people who follow it only for the base sensual liking, notoriety, and vulgar business ends; people who all too soon scoff and sneer, but yet remain to stagnate its higher purposes.

The profession of the theatre and the ennobling art of acting is worth such pains, or otherwise it had rather better be relegated to the realms of oblivion, effaced from the list of fine arts and accomplishments, attainments to be consummated only by years of methodical preparation, study, and finish through the concatenate mediums and essential forces of higher education and an honest strife for individual supremacy.

Today, the managers and agents who cockily strut the walks of the "rialto," and snugly roost in the dust

of their dingy coops, comprise (with very few exceptions) a mass of *conspicuous nothingness*. They do not deserve the smallest consequence of success or merit in their depraved estimate and ignorant understanding of the true nobility of the institution they otherwise vulgarly appropriate, and the art they profanely desecrate.

As to the horde of migratory actors who swoop from corner to corner, from agency to agency, from office to office, awaiting the chance to fight for the solitary crumb that may be thrown from the door of any of the well-stuffed denizens, for them I say, the day of unapt championship is past. The generosity of the better actor to readily condone for and shield the stubborn deficiencies of his less deserving brother, and to ever accord him an estimation thoroughly amiss to a wilful attitude of disregard and neglect of attempted attainment to the proper essentials that should characterize a man pursuing an art occupation, such magnanimity should be as equally and positively reversed to an earnest endeavor to remove from the march of progress such stuffy objectionableness. Neither should the worthiest of the stage longer sacrifice at the altar of *jargon controlment*, their art, manhood, and independence.

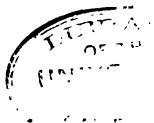
The man or woman who at some time finds, that, in remaining longer in his self-chosen vocation, he is belittling his manhood and talents, and so considers his condition a mere condescension, and consequently forsakes that self-elected occupation, is as much to be censured as the man who, in still abiding condescension, does not lift his hand or voice in honest endeavor to add only that little which lies within the power of his single energy to better the general condi-

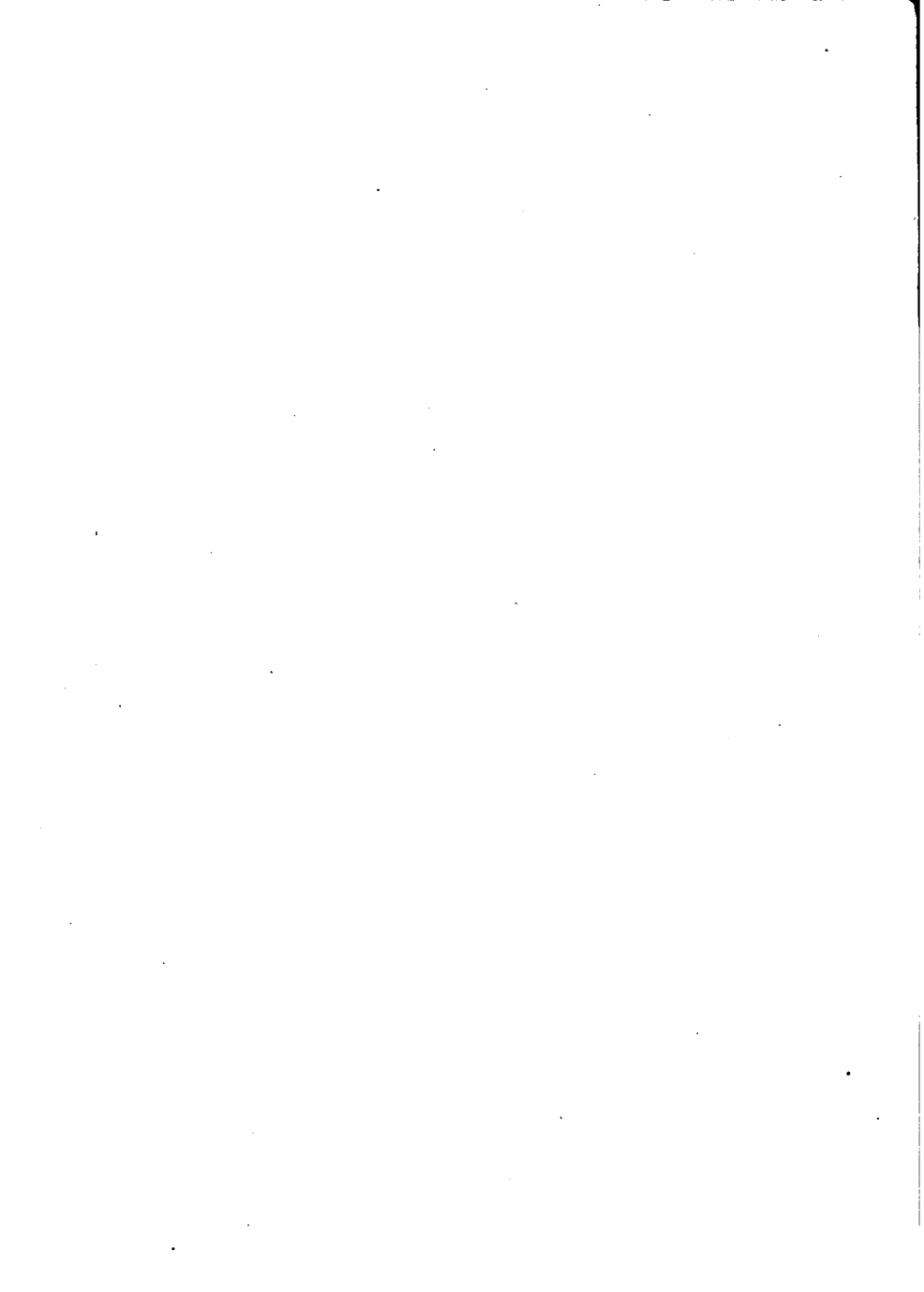
tion of that vocation of which he is a part. And if any man doing this much, willingly and uncomplainingly enduring all the dishonest, ill-mannered, and illiterate abuse of the *sovereign peasantry* that rules the theatre in America today, if he has literally been turned from its every avenue of traffic, and while still trying to lend devoted, honest, and truthful benefit to that chosen highway, it still is within his possibility to open a new and broader avenue if he does not fear the *anarchical vulgar hand* of art assassination.

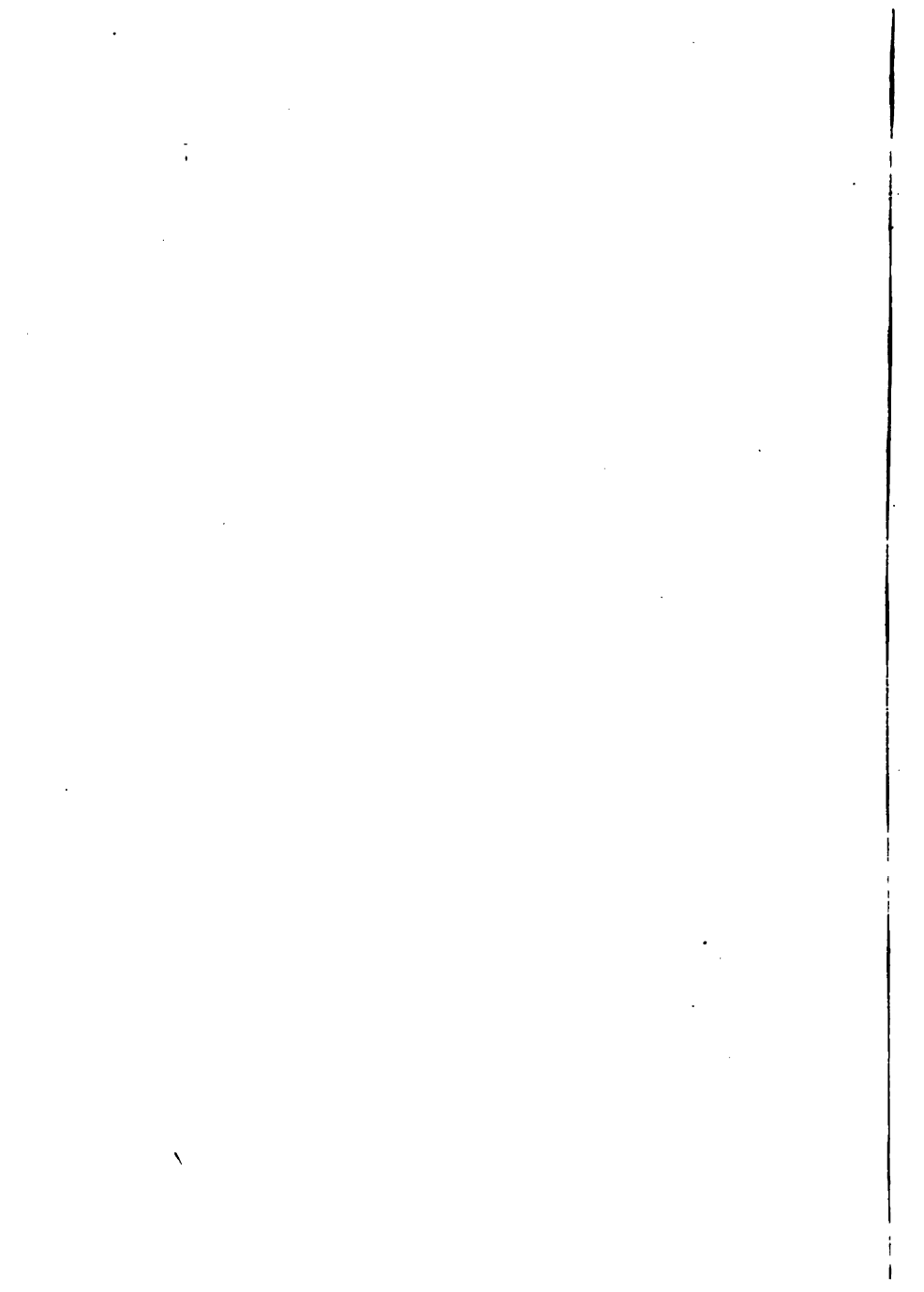
There should always exist in equal distinctive rank, the opera—grand, romantic, and comic, (permitting of genuine burlesque), the drama—tragedy, romance, and comedy (including genuine farce), and the vaudeville—the diverting, wholesome trivialties of stage entertainment. Each should require a qualification for the practice of its special art. Everything aside from these would then naturally be forced into some exclusive classification. There will always remain the charlatan, the fakir, and the audience to gape at him. And it behooves the State, the unitive authority over all national conditions, to promote and safeguard that which is qualifiedly worthy from the ruthless invasion and contaminating influence of that which is endangering. The force of such directorship will not be withheld if the beneficence of the institution of the theatre is purely felt in an honest and idealistic strife of special individualism towards a perfected common union.

Show beneficence a tangible qualification of educational import, and his activity will bustle in the welfare of the theatre as quickly as in any purpose of dignified worthiness.

I believe in the theatre! I love, revere, and respect every condition of it that tends through integrity and decency to amuse, persuade, and instruct mankind; every condition that strives to uplift, correct, and guide the higher instincts. But when these conditions do not exist,—when I know that there is too often no special effort to have them exist, but rather a spirit of intentioned, palpable substitution of dishonesty and questionable propriety,—I do not count myself disloyal to that institution and its incumbents in honestly and openly saying, that under such conditions, the theatre has not, does not, nor can it ever truthfully fulfill to mankind the tremendous possibilities which its mission foretells. Neither will it until it shall itself feel, and transmit to worthy judgment, an unmistakable sense of qualified learning, soundly vibrating through the harmonious cords of its human instrumentality, the playwright—manager—actor, the profession of the theatre!

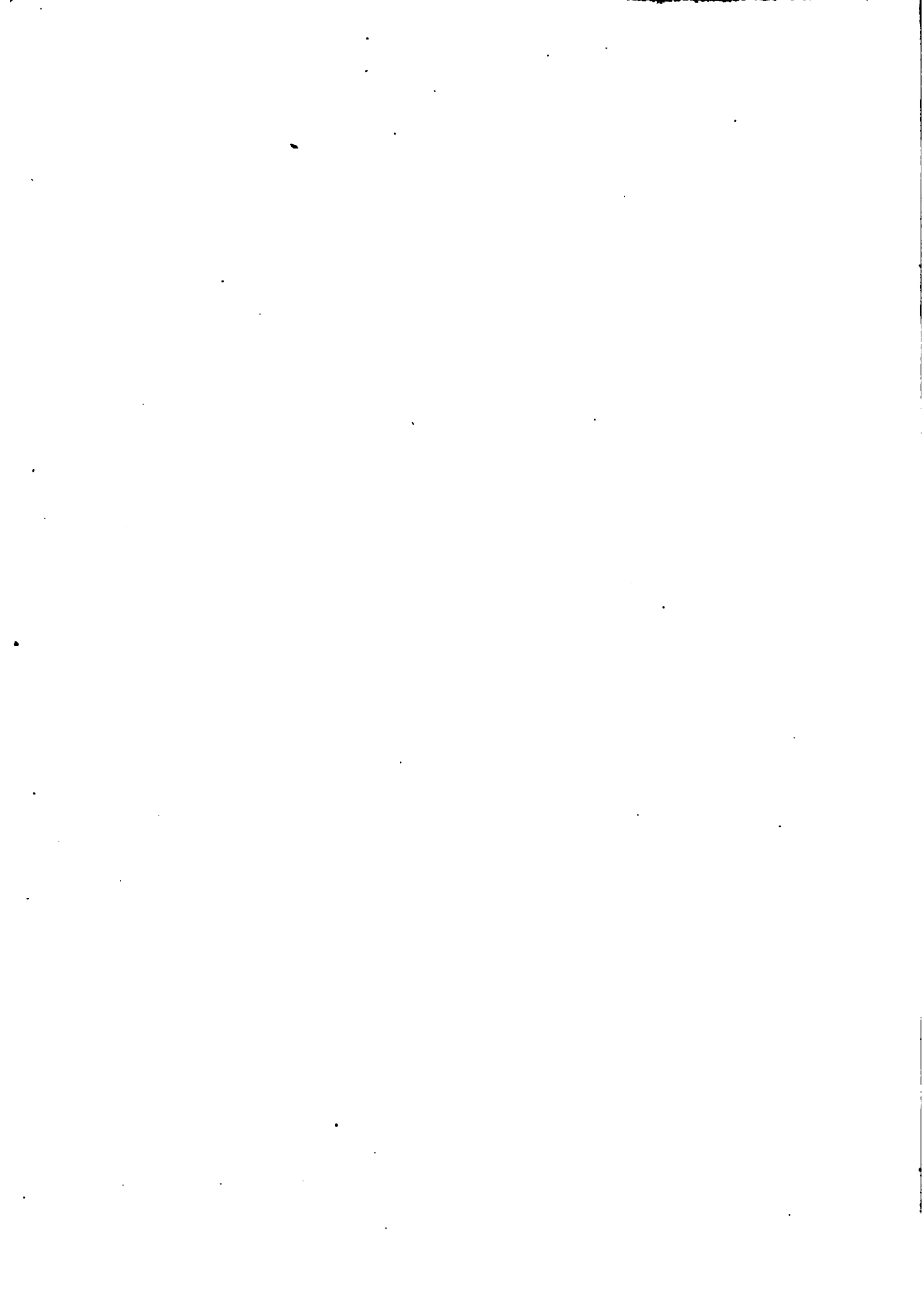












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The image shows a close-up of a book cover with a marbled paper design. The marbling features a dark green base with numerous white circular spots and intricate, branching veins of red and yellow. A yellow, trapezoidal label is affixed to the cover, containing handwritten and printed text. The left edge of the book is visible, showing a dark, possibly black, binding material.

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